Select Passages
Theological Writings
Jowett

BX
5038
J6
1902
GTU
Storage

Chat

Library of the
Church Divinity School
of the Pacific

No. 16309 Class.....

Ex Dono Unknown

Date entered, 1939

To [illegible]
Hobart Clutwood.

With kind Regards.
L. M

March 17 1904.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/selectpassagesfr0000john

BENJAMIN JOWETT

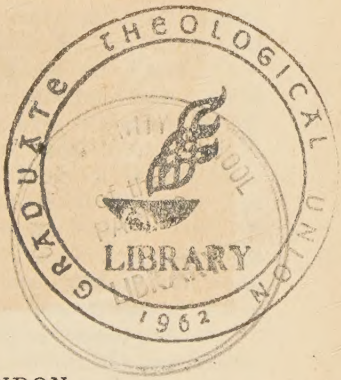
ætat 54

SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN JOWETT

LATE MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE AND PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD. DOCTOR IN THEOLOGY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LEYDEN

EDITED BY LEWIS CAMPBELL, M.A., LL.D.

HONORARY FELLOW OF BALLIOL COLLEGE, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS



LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1902

BX
5038
J6
1902

L518
J87

OXFORD: HORACE HART
PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

THE passages of Professor Jowett's writings which are here reprinted have been selected from the following sources: —

1. The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, with notes and dissertations. 2nd edition, 1859.

2. An Essay *On the Interpretation of Scripture* contributed to *Essays and Reviews*, 1860, and reprinted in the 3rd edition of the *Epistles*.

3. Three posthumous volumes of *Sermons*, edited by the Honourable and Very Reverend W. H. Fremantle, Dean of Ripon, 1899–1901.

4. A few extracts from Professor Jowett's Notebooks, which were published in his Biography (*Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett*, Murray, 1896).

5. Some MS. fragments, which Professor Jowett had preserved amongst his papers, probably with the intention of working them into future Sermons. These *Anecdota* are indicated with an asterisk prefixed.

Although the Sermons are naturally less finished than the Essays which were published in the author's lifetime, Jowett's style in preaching is not markedly different from that of his notes or dissertations on theological subjects. In both there is an avoidance

16309

of mere rhetoric, and an appeal at once to reason and to spiritual emotion. Nor were his views of religious truth much altered after middle life.

Until his forty-second year, Jowett's main interest centred in theology; and afterwards, although the bulk of his working time was occupied by the labours of the Greek Professorship, including his translations, and by the duties of the Balliol Headship, religious topics were rarely absent from his mind. This is proved by many entries in his note-books. And he deliberately sought an outlet for his thoughts in preaching.

He wrote from Scotland to an intimate friend in August, 1865:—'I certainly mean when my Plato is finished to devote two or three years to preaching, giving up my whole mind to this and publishing the Sermons[1].'

A special opportunity occurred in 1866, when Arthur Stanley, by that time well established in the Deanery of Westminster, invited his friend to preach to the Sunday afternoon congregation in the Abbey. And every summer thenceforth, shortly after the conclusion of the Oxford term, the Master of Balliol's Westminster Sermon was an event eagerly anticipated and richly enjoyed by a goodly company. This continued until the year of his death (1893). In 1892, having recently recovered from a dangerous illness, he delivered there the sermon on Richard Baxter, containing the reflections on old age which appear on pp. 207–11 of this volume.

It is hoped that from these extracts some readers may be induced to proceed to the Sermons themselves and to the work on St. Paul, which was reissued

[1] *Life*, vol. i. p. 412.

by the present editor in 1896, with the omission of some portions of the Commentary. This partial abridgement was in accordance with Professor Jowett's own direction. He said, 'I think that perhaps two-thirds of what I have written in theology might be preserved.'

CONTENTS

PAGE

I. The Gospels and the Life of Christ.

Christ as revealed by the Evangelists 1
The Words of Christ as the Centre of the Christian Life 5
One having Authority 6
The Character of Christ's Teaching 7
How we should view Discrepancies in the Gospels 9
The Living Witnesses of Christ's Work 12
The True Disciple 13
What Christ says to us now . . . 14
Life for Others, Life in God . . . 17
The Lord's Prayer 19
The World prepared for Christianity 20
The Ideal and the Real Christ . . 21

II. St. Paul and his Mission.

The Conversion of St. Paul . . . 24
Changes of Character 25
The Temperament of Religious Leaders 26

PAGE

II. ST. PAUL AND HIS MISSION (*continued*).

The Thorn in the Flesh 29
Knowledge of Mankind based on Love 30
Strength out of Weakness . . . 31

III. PROPHECY.

Old Testament Chronology . . . 35
Transition from the Nation to the Individual 36
The Prophets and the New Dispensation 39
The Language of the Old Testament 41
The Twofold Lesson of Goodness and Severity 42
Use and Misuse of Prophecy . . . 43
The Development of Prophecy . . 44
The Interpretation of Prophecy . 48
The Causes of Progress 50
The Living Power of the Jewish Prophets 53

IV. THE EARLY CHURCH.

Development of the Church . . . 54
Development of Doctrine 55
Suddenness and Permanence of Early Conversions 58
Regeneration 60
The Transition from Judaism . . 60
The Fullness of Time 66

PAGE

IV. THE EARLY CHURCH (*continued*).

Relation of Christianity to Nature and History 67
The Persecution of the First Preachers 68
The First Day of the Week . . . 72

V. CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES.

Justification by Faith 74
Original Sin 77
Atonement 80
Predestination and Free Will . . 94
The Divine Attributes 104
Prayer 109
Immortality 114

VI. RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES.

The Simple Truths of Religion . . 117
The Government of God and the Laws of Nature 118
The Opposition of Reason and Faith 119
The Evils of Society 120
The Church and the World . . . 123
The Divine Nature 124
Religion and Politics 126
Interpretation of Scripture . . . 128
Faith and Experience 129
Faith ithout Knowledge, and Knowledge without Faith 130
The Psalms in Public Worship . . 132
Belief of the Heart 133

PAGE

VI. Religious Difficulties (*continued*).

The Evil of Sectarianism 134
The Weakness of Religious Feelings 135
God, not Party 136
Religion and Science not opposed . 137
Criticism and Reality 139
The Duty of the Critical Student . 139
The Manifestation of God . . . 140
Evidences of God in the Universe . 141
The Sacraments 147
Good and Evil in Religion 148
'Doubtful Disputations' 149
Exaggerations of Religious Feeling . 150

VII. The Religions of the World.

The Comparative Study of Religions 152
Buddhism 153
The Value of Comparative Theology 154
The Sources of Corruption in Religion 156
The Growth of Early Religions . . 158
The Roman Religion 163
The Two Great Forms of Religion 164

VIII. The Future of Religion.

Things which cannot be shaken . . 167
Religious Progress 169
The True Evidences of Christianity 170
The Brotherhood of all Mankind . 172
The Church of the Future . . . 174

PAGE

VIII. THE FUTURE OF RELIGION (*continued*).

Tests of Religious Movements . . 176
Perversions of Religion 178
The Personal Element in Religion . 179
The Originality of Christianity . . 180
'Phases of Faith' 181
A New Reformation 182
The Will of God as the Law of Life 183
Diminution of Differences between the Churches 185
The Church of England as it is . . 187
Individual Life and Institutions . . 190
The Invisible Church 192
Looking Forward 193

IX. RELIGIOUS PERSONALITIES.

Death as the Revealer of a Man's Life 194
The Teacher and his Disciples . . 195
Loyola and his Followers 197
Pascal's Theory and Practice of Religion 201
The Spirit of Religious Leaders . . 204
Religion and the Lord's Supper . . 205
An Old Man's Retrospect 207
Charles Dickens 212
A Liberal Clergyman 213
The Lady Augusta Stanley . . . 214
W. H. Smith 216
Lord Macaulay 216

PAG

X. THE WISDOM OF LIFE.

Ideals 2
The Sameness of Life 2
Wasted Lives 2
Causes of Failure in Life 2
How far does Christianity influence the World? 2
Moral Weakness 2
Casuistry 2
The Evils of Casuistry 2
The Imitation of Christ 2
Broken Lives 2
The Happiness of Family Life . . 2
The Softening Influence of Death . 2
Sympathy, Human and Divine . . 2
Changes in Life and Character . . 2
The Reality of Religious Influences 2

I

THE GOSPELS AND THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Christ as revealed by the Evangelists

* The life of Christ is at a distance from us, like the sight which a mariner sees over a great water, receding towards the horizon. The record is fragmentary, the three first Gospels being three recensions of the same original narrative, as is proved by their verbal similarities; the fourth Gospel, which is verbally dissimilar, representing, not the very words, but the mind of Christ as He appeared afterwards to one who had deeply pondered upon His character and life. And succeeding ages have added to their conception of Him what was best and holiest among His followers. Many things which Jesus said were not understood at the time; 'they understood not the words which He spake unto them'; how then could they be accurate reporters of them? Neither do we pretend to say that we understand them in all their depth; or that we do not adapt them erroneously to our own circumstances or state of life. To one age they have spoken the language of Protestantism, to another of Catholicism; to one, they have seemed to maintain the divine

right or origin of existing institutions, another has discovered in them the seeds of socialism. The truth was that they contained none of these things, but something truer, holier, deeper, of which they were the perversions.

There are some veils or difficulties which will always interpose themselves, when we attempt to apply the words of Christ to our own times. They do not seem to be quite appropriate to the altered world in which we live. They are so simple and modern society is so complex. The first disciples were as different from ourselves as the Eastern nations are from the Western, or the Ancients from the Moderns. They lived in the country or in small villages under a bright Eastern sun; they were for the most part fishermen, easily supporting themselves by the labour of their hands—not like the over-tasked workers in our great towns. They were not exactly educated, nor yet uneducated; they were men of simple and gentle manners; though poor, we should err in confounding them with the poorer classes among ourselves; the truth is that difference of ranks is not marked in the East in the same manner as in our European world. Their ideas were of an Oriental or Jewish cast based upon the words of the Prophets or of the Law, which they interpreted by translation after the manner of their age. And Christ speaks to them as to Jews; He does not anticipate, nor could they have understood the thoughts or ideas which the civilized world has accumulated in eighteen centuries. Neither does He attempt to clear away from their minds every vestige of Jewish superstition, but only such errors as seemed to pervert and corrupt the soul. He

does not teach them the well-known and in many respects valuable rules of prudence which Political Economy lays down for the management of the poor in an industrial and populous society. The lesson which He preached was deeper and more comprehensive—that they are our brethren and equals, in some respects to be preferred: 'Son, thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things,' and 'Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Neither did He determine the relations of the Church to the State, except by refusing to determine them: 'My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight for it.' Neither did He define the relations of the Jews to the Romans, but said only, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' There was a sense in which they were to call no man Master, for their Master was in heaven; and yet when their hearts were sometimes thrilled by the memory of the Maccabean wars they were to remember that 'they who take the sword should perish with the sword.' Neither did He say whether men should fast or not, but only 'when ye fast be not as the hypocrites,' and 'when the Bridegroom is taken away, then shall ye fast.' Men desire to have precise rules or formulas of action; they busy themselves with questions of casuistry, which in real life hardly or never occur. They raise doubts about the unseen world. But Christ speaks to them from a more universal point of view—not like the philosopher of whom Plato speaks as the spectator of all time and of all existence, but rather as one who saw through man into the very soul and principle of his being, to whom the world parted asunder and left him alone with God.

Yet there is another difficulty or veil which falls upon the eyes or hearts of many of us when we read the narrative of the Gospels. The nature of Christ appears to be so far removed from us that we have nothing in common with it. The tendency of theology has been to take Christ out of our sight, and even sometimes to place others between us and Him until His life on earth has become unreal or has been confused with another life of which we cannot even entertain a conjecture. But this is not the image of Him which is revealed to us in the Gospels: rather He seems to be subject to every human sorrow, joy, temptation, affection of which we are capable. He does not set Himself above us, but thinks of mankind as His brethren. The narrative of Christ in the Gospels, if we make allowance for what is local and fragmentary, is simple and consistent. There is nothing in the character of Christ of which the beginnings may not be seen in some of His followers. And we should make a nearer approach to a true estimate of His nature, by thinking of the best men and women whom we have ever known, than by immersing ourselves in the controversies of the past. He came to teach us that God speaks to men not in the thunder, nor in the storm, nor in the whirlwind, but in the still small voice. We cannot think of Him as the God of battles or of armies, as the God who wielded the powers of nature described in the Psalms and the Prophets, but rather as the suffering servant of God: 'A bruised reed shall He not break, nor quench the smoking flax: He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall any hear His voice in the streets.' His gentleness is

also His power. This is the image of that Christ who carried our sorrows and bare our infirmities, whom not having seen we love, because He first loved us; and the memory of that love yet abides in the heart of the human race.

(*Unpublished.*)

The Words of Christ as the Centre of the Christian Life

There is no study of theology which is likely to exercise a more elevating influence on the individual, or a more healing one on divisions of opinion, than the study of the words of Christ Himself. The heart is its own witness to them; all Christian sects acknowledge them; they seem to escape or rise above the region or atmosphere of controversy. The form in which they exhibit the Gospel to us is the simplest and also the deepest; they are more free from details than any other part of Scripture, and they are absolutely independent of personal and national influences. In them is contained the expression of the inner life, of mankind, and of the Church; there, too, the individual beholds, as in a glass, the image of a goodness which is not of this world. To rank their authority below that of Apostles and Evangelists is to give up the best hope of reuniting Christendom in itself, and of making Christianity a universal religion.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 326–7.)

* The words of Christ are the centre, the heart, the life of the Christian religion. The simple narrative of the Gospels more than any other

writing, has affected the course of the world. It has exercised a great though indefinite influence on the institutions and laws of Christian countries, on the average standard of morality, on the teaching of the Christian Church. In the worst of times and places there have been a few who have sought to be like Christ, to whom the very corruption which they saw around them has given a stimulus to a higher life.

Then the religion of Christ is not only a word but a reality; it is necessarily more exclusive, yet also more comprehensive. For it includes all who are leading the life of Christ in any sensible degree; it excludes all who, though belonging to a Christian community, are not doing the works of Christ. Nor need we necessarily regard ourselves as divided from the student of physical science who is too much under the dominion of the visible, or from the artisan who is unwilling to join in Christian forms of worship. To all men's hearts the words of Christ find a way when they are rightly considered. For no one will say that to hate is better than to love, darkness better than light, impurity than holiness, falsehood better than truth. And it may very likely be the case that when all the endless books and tomes of scholastic divinity, ancient and modern, shall have ceased to interest mankind, the words of Christ, and these alone, shall prevail.

(*Unpublished.*)

One having Authority

* We are told that Christ spoke to men as one that had authority; not an authority like that

of the Scribes and Pharisees, which is given from without, but an authority which flowed naturally from the absolute conviction of the truth of His own words. Of this too we might find imperfect examples within our own experience. For when a man is possessed with a truth and feels that he has a mission to utter it, he becomes a power in the world. So Christ having received the truth from His Father, brought it down to men. The opinions of the world, the customs of society, the traditions of Churches—they too had an authority, but it was of another sort. They did not come immediately from God; they did not find a witness in the better mind and conscience of man; they were the words of an age and country, and might be even unmeaning or absurd in some other age or country. But the words of Christ were eternal and unchangeable; as long as human nature lasts, while the world stands, these and these alone shall never pass away.

(*Unpublished.*)

The Character of Christ's Teaching

* There have been those who, by infinite labour and by long processes of inference, have discovered some new and important idea; there are others who, without having learned or been taught, by a sort of intuition or inspiration attain of themselves to the same truth. This latter sort of knowledge we may truly regard as the nearer image of the knowledge which we ascribe to Christ. And sometimes it happens that truth has been overlaid by opinion or by tradition, and the sense of duty has been perverted by casuistry, or the general principle has been

lost in minutiae: then arises some honest and able man who by the light of common sense cuts the knot and restores to men their natural sense of truth and right: this again, though an inadequate, appears to be not an untrue image of the character of our Lord's teaching. . . .

Not only did the simplicity of the words of Christ find a way to the hearts of men, but they felt them to be words spoken out of His infinite love for them: the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat—they expounded the law after their manner—but there was no human tie which bound them to their fellow men. Christ came to deliver man out of His endless love for him. . . . It was natural to Him when He looked upon men to love them, as a father or mother naturally love their own children. For them, not for Himself, He felt and took thought: He saw them suffering from sickness and sin, rebelling against the law of God and the appointment of Nature. They were wandering in the wilderness out of the way; the face of God was hidden from them. And He spoke to them in a manner which they had never heard before of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God. He told them that their Father which is in heaven was more ready to hear than they to pray; that He did not need to be told of them, although they needed to be told of Him, that He never cast out any that came to Him. Only they must renounce their sins. They could not be the friends of God and hate their brethren; they could not truly worship God when they sought only to be seen of men; they could not hold communion with God and be the ser-

vants of impurity and sin. But let them once break through the hardness of heart which divided them from God, through the veil of passion which hid Him from them; let them believe in the word of Christ, and like Him they would become the Sons of God. The God of whom He spoke to them was the God of Israel, the God of their fathers, but He was also the God of purity and love, of holiness and truth; and they could only see Him in so far as they became like Him. And men felt that what He told them was in accordance with their own better mind. The message of love had a transforming power; they lifted up their eyes to God and were delivered from the evil.

(*Unpublished.*)

How we should view Discrepancies in the Gospels

The agony had ceased, the final hour had come, although, a short time before, Christ, like some of those who have been partakers of His sufferings, had tasted the bitterness of death, and there was a moment when the cry had been wrung from Him, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' while at another moment He poured forth the prayer, more divine than any earthquake or darkness which veiled the awful sight, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The narrative in St. John's Gospel differs in several points from the narrative of the other Gospels; and the love of truth compels us to admit that the words of Christ, and especially these last words, are differently reported by St. Luke and St. John. When we consider the confusion

and uncertainty of the scene, we shall not wonder that some spoke of our Lord as expiring with a cry, which is the record of St. Matthew and St. Mark, while others, as in St. Luke's Gospel, reported Him to have said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit;' and others again describe Him as pouring forth His last breath in the words, 'It is finished,' which are found in the Gospel of St. John. Ingenious persons have attempted to harmonize these and similar discrepancies in the Gospels. But there is little wisdom in applying to Scripture a mode of reconciliation which we should not apply to an ordinary history. The thought of Christ which has filled the mind of the world has nothing to do with those microscopic inquiries respecting the composition of the Gospels which have so greatly exercised critics for more than a century, and had better perhaps be dropped for ever, now that we seem to know all that can be known on the subject. All the four, or rather the three, narratives of the Crucifixion (for that of St. Mark adds nothing of consequence to the remaining three) are extremely simple; and there is no trace in any of them that the Evangelists would have regarded the Lord as saying one thing with one part of His nature and another with another; or that they felt, or would have even understood, the difficulties which the after-reflections of theologians have introduced into the text of Scripture. (*College Sermons*, 326–7.)

The character of St. John's Gospel is not historical, but spiritual, not descriptive of the outward forms of the Church, but of the inner life of the soul.

It hardly ever touches upon the relation of believers to the external world or to society, but only upon their relations to God and Christ. They are withdrawn from the world that they may be one with the Father and with the Son; they eat the bread of life; they drink the water of life; they receive another spirit which is to guide them into all truth. They are not, as in the parable, like the wheat growing together with the tares; nor do they become a great tree under the shadow of which the birds of the air take shelter: they are the branches indeed of which Christ is the Vine, but no outward glory or power is attributed to them. Nor are they bound together by a common external symbol; for, as you will remember, the institution of the Sacraments is not recorded in the Gospel of St. John. Many reasons have been given for the omission; the author of the fourth Gospel has been sometimes supposed to have avoided subjects which were mentioned in the three first. But there is no proof that he was acquainted with them; the more probable reason is, if any is needed, that he is putting forward another aspect of the life of Christ, and that the outward fades away before his mind in comparison with the inward. Christ is not described in the Gospel of St. John as instituting the Sacrament of Baptism or the Lord's Supper, but as teaching men that He is the Bread of Life. And, if we look closely at the external events recorded, we shall see that they are told for the sake of some lesson or discourse which is appended to them, rather than for the sake of the events themselves. The miracles are very few; one class of them, that of healing the demoniacs, is omitted. For example, the miracle of

the five thousand is narrated in the three first Gospels chiefly as a wonder, but in the fourth Gospel with a manifest reference to the lesson which follows concerning 'the bread of life.'

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 182–4.)

The Living Witnesses of Christ's Work

'He went about doing good.' So we might say in our own age of two or three who have been personally known to us, 'He or she went about doing good.' They are the living witnesses to us of His work. If we observe them we shall see that they did good because they were good—because they lived for others and not for themselves, because they had a higher standard of truth and therefore men could trust them, because their love was deeper and therefore they drew others after them. These are they of whom we read in Scripture that they bear the image of Christ until His coming again, and of a few of them that they have borne the image of His sufferings, and to us they are the best interpreters of His life. They too have a hidden strength which is derived from communion with the Unseen; they pass their lives in the service of God, and yet only desire to be thought unprofitable servants. The honours or praises which men sometimes shower upon them are not much to their taste. Their only joy is to do the will of God and to relieve the wants of their brethren. Their only or greatest sorrow is to think of the things which, from inadvertence or necessity, they have been compelled to leave undone. Their way of life has been simple; they have not had much to do with

the world; they have not had time to accumulate stores of learning. Sometimes they have seen with superhuman clearness one or two truths of which the world was especially in need. They may have been scarcely known, or not known until after their death; they may have had their trials too—failing health, declining years, the ingratitude of men—but they have endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

(*College Sermons*, 316–7.)

The True Disciple

* 'When others are happy, I am happy' were the words of a poor paralytic, for whom no more good was reserved in this world. That is the spirit of Christ. To place others before ourselves, to think of others and not of ourselves, to be in the world but not of it, to walk by faith and not by sight, to be able to say 'Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done'—these are notes of the true disciple of Christ, which we too have been privileged to witness; and such examples have strengthened our faith and supported our doubting hearts. '*Sit mea anima cum illis*' has been the expression of the thought of many a one who has asked no more than that he might be the companion of the righteous in life and death.

*He who would imitate the teaching of Christ must be simple and sincere in all his words. He need not set forth his thoughts in rhetorical style, but he must be what he preaches. He must have a strong hold of a few first truths which will be interwoven in his life. He will be very certain that without holiness no man can see the Lord; or, as we might express the same thought in modern

language, that without morality there can be no true religion. There is nothing that he will fear more than hypocrisy. (*Unpublished.*)

What Christ says to us now

An illustrious person not now living is reported to have said, 'If Jesus Christ were to come again upon the earth, I have often thought that He would have been written down.' He could not have approved of many things in our modern world, and therefore the world would probably have been at enmity with Him. When He heard of our religious parties 'calling down fire from heaven on each other,' must He not have said to them, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of'? And when He saw that these religious divisions extended to the education of the young, may we not imagine Him to have taken a little child, and set him in the midst and asked whether we meant to make him the victim of a religious dispute? When He was told of another who belonged to a different persuasion unlicensed by any regular authority going about doing good, would He have said 'Forbid him'? Might He not have been heard repeating to those who insisted that they could literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing'? Or to those who make casuistical distinctions about the meaning of words, or draw remote inferences from them, would He not have said 'Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay,' or perhaps, 'Ye make void the word of God by your traditions'? Or to those who exaggerate the importance of days,

'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'? For we can hardly suppose that He who came to destroy Judaism would have allowed Jewish errors to remain among Christians. Or when He saw the value set on times and places, and the pomp of outward ceremonial, would He not have said, 'The hour is coming and now is, when neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain, men shall worship the Father;' and 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth'? Or to a rich and luxurious age, would He have abstained out of delicacy, or any fear of misunderstanding, from repeating the parable of Lazarus and Dives? For the words of Christ necessarily go beyond the established ideas of religion, or the forms of polite society; they pierce like a sword into all things. And yet while they go so far beyond the received religious opinions of Christians in some respects, there are others in which they may seem to fall short of them.

He would have taught the new commandment, which is also old—purity of tho ght as well as of word and act; the not doing things that we may be seen of men, or laying up for ourselves treasure upon earth; the seeking first the kingdom of God, the forgiveness of injuries, the love of enemies—'that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven.' What! only the Sermon on the Mount! and we verily thought that He would have spoken to us of apostolical succession, of baptismal regeneration, of justification by faith only, of final assurance, of satisfaction and atonement; or that He would have told us, not that the Father came out and kissed the prodigal son, and fell upon his

neck and wept, but that there was one way, and one way only, by which men could be restored to the favour of God, or that He would have wrought a miracle in the face of all men and put an end to the controversy about them; but He only says 'There shall be no sign given to this generation': or that He would have told us plainly when we asked Him about another life; but He only replies, 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.' We thought that we should have been confirmed in those points of faith or practice in which we differ from others, and that they would have been condemned by Him; that we should have heard from His lips precise statements of doctrines; that He would have decided authoritatively disputed points, saying, 'Thus and thus shall he think who would be saved.' But He puts us off with parables about little children, about the wheat and the tares growing together, about the new wine and the old bottles, about the wayward children sitting in the market-place, about a house divided against itself. Instead of answering our questions, He asks others which we cannot answer. The language of theology seems never to fall from His lips, but only 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself,' 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' He goes back to the first principles of truth and right; He speaks as one having authority, out of the fullness of His nature, and not like any creature whom we ever heard. And still when we listen to His words, the conviction is forced upon us, 'Truly this was the Son of God.' (*College Sermons*, 68–71.)

Life for Others, Life in God

Men are for the most part content with themselves if they abstain from evil and do a little good in the world. They never consider, or hardly ever, how their whole lives might be given up to the service of God and their fellow creatures. They are the creatures of habit and repute; they do not depart from the customary ways of society. Nor can we deny that most of us would be unequal to this greater life, nor set any limit to the good which may be done by those who sit still in the house, who scarcely ever leave the seclusion of their own village or home. But let us not be ignorant also that there is a higher and nobler ideal than this—the ideal of a life which is passed in doing good to man; in seeking to alleviate the miseries and inequalities of his lot, to raise him out of the moral and physical degradation in which he is sunk, and to implant in him a higher sense of truth and right. What would have become of the world if there had been no such teachers or saviours of mankind? For the lower are inspired by the higher, and most of all by the highest of all. That is what makes the life of Christ such a precious possession to the world, not merely the good that He did when on earth, in teaching and consoling the afflicted, but the example which He left behind for all time of another and higher sort of character such as had never existed before in this world. To live for others only, and only in the service of God, to be the mediator between God and man, to reconcile the world to itself—this is the idea which Christ is always

setting before us, and of which those who are His disciples must in their measure seek to partake. . . .

To this simple life Christ invites us; to return to the beginning of Christianity, now that the world has got so far onward in its course. He speaks to us across the ages still, telling us to come back to the first principles of religion. And of this simple religion we have the assurance in ourselves, and the better we become the more assured we are of it. Who can doubt that love is better than hatred, truth than falsehood, righteousness than unrighteousness, holiness than impurity? Whatever uncertainty there may be about the early history of Christianity, there is no uncertainty about the Christian life. Questions of criticism have been raised concerning the Gospels; there have been disputes about rites and ceremonies; whole systems of theology have passed away: but that which truly constitutes religion, that in which good men are like one another, that in which they chiefly resemble Christ, remains the same. And it may be regarded as one of the great blessings of the age in which we live that, after so many wanderings out of the way, we are at length beginning to distinguish the essential from the accidental, and to appreciate more than any former age the true meaning of the words of Christ. . . .

The highest and best that we can conceive, whether revealed to us in the person of Christ or in any other, *that* is God. Because this is relative to our minds, and therefore necessarily imperfect, we must not cast it away from us, or seek for some other unknown truth which can be described only by negatives. To such a temper the words of the

Prophet may be applied: 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? But the word is very nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' Every good thought in our own mind, every good man whom we meet, or of whom we read in former ages, every great word or action, is a witness to us of the nature of God.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 89–93.)

The Lord's Prayer

It would be an error to suppose that the words of the Lord's Prayer are altogether new, or that they seemed to the disciples of Christ quite different from anything which they had ever heard before. Truth does not descend from heaven like a sacred stone dropped out of another world, concerning which men vainly dispute what it is or whence it came. But it is the good word, the good thought, the good action, which arises in a man's mind; as the Apostle also says, 'The word is very nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.' The great prophet or teacher draws out what is latent in man, he interrogates their consciences, he finds a witness in them to the best. And, therefore, when we are told that parallels to all the petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer may be found in Rabbinical writers, when we remark that in Seneca and other Gentile philosophers we are exhorted to forgiveness of injuries, when we read in Epictetus the words, 'We have all sinned, some more, some less grievously,' there is no reason why we should be shocked or surprised at these parallelisms. Neither

is the Lord's Prayer less fitted to be the medium of our communion with God because ancient holy men have used several of its petitions before the time of Christ, as all Christians have been in the habit of using them since. Are not all true sayings and all good thoughts, in all times and in all places, the anticipation of a truth which is shining more and more unto the perfect day?

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 251.)

The World prepared for Christianity

Spiritual life, no less than natural life, is often the very opposite of the elements which seem to give birth to it. The preparation for the way of the Lord, which John the Baptist preached, did not consist in a direct reference to the Saviour. The words 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire,' and 'He shall burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable,' could have given the Jews no exact conception of Him who 'did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.' It was in another way that John prepared for Christ, by quickening the moral sense of the people, and sounding in their ears the voice 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Beyond this useful lesson, there was a kind of vacancy in the preaching of John. He himself, as 'he was finishing his course,' testified that his work was incomplete, and that he was not the Christ. The Jewish people were prepared by his preaching for the coming of Christ, just as an individual might be prepared to receive Him by the conviction of sin and the conscious need of forgiveness.

Except from the Gospel history and the writings of Josephus and Philo, we know but little of the tendencies of the Jewish mind in the time of our Lord. Yet we cannot doubt that the entrance of Christianity into the world was not sudden and abrupt; that is an illusion which arises in the mind from our slender acquaintance with contemporary opinions. Better and higher and holier as it was, it was not absolutely distinct from the teaching of the doctors of the law either in form or substance; it was not unconnected with, but gave life and truth to, the mystic fancies of Alexandrian philosophy. Even in the counsels of perfection of the Sermon on the Mount, there is probably nothing which might not be found, either in letter or spirit, in Philo or some other Jewish or Eastern writer. The peculiarity of the Gospel is, not that it teaches what is wholly new, but that it draws out of the treasure-house of the human heart things new and old, gathering together in one the dispersed fragments of the truth. The common people would not have 'heard Him gladly,' but for the truth of what He said. The heart was its own witness to it. The better nature of man, though but for a moment, responded to it, spoken as it was with authority, and not as the scribes; with simplicity, and not as the great teachers of the law; and sanctified by the life and actions of Him from whose lips it came, and 'Who spake as never man spake.'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 110–2.)

The Ideal and the Real Christ

An ideal necessarily mingles with all conceptions of Christ; why then should we object to

a Christ who is necessarily ideal? Do persons really suppose that they know Christ as they know a living friend? Is not Christ in the Sacrament, Christ at the right hand of God, 'Christ in you the hope of glory,' an ideal? Have not the disciples of Christ from the age of St. Paul onwards been always idealizing His memory?

We must accept the fact that the life of Christ is only partially known to us, like that of other great teachers of religion. And this is best for us. We have enough to assist us, but not enough to constrain us. And upon this basis the thoughts of men in many ages may raise an ideal more perfect than any actual conception of Him. Each age may add something to the perfection and balance of the whole. Did not St. Paul idealize Christ? Do we suppose that all which he says of Him is simply matter of fact, or known to St. Paul as such? It might have been that the character would have been less universal if we had been able to trace more defined features.

What would have happened to the world if Christ had not come? What would happen if He were to come again? What would have happened if we had perfectly known the words and teaching of Christ? How far can we individualize Christ, or is He only the perfect image of humanity?

Instead of receiving Christianity as once given, all mankind from the first should have been endeavouring to improve it, to adapt it to the wants of other ages, to get rid of its eccentricities and peculiarities. We fancy that it came in perfection from Christ and therefore are afraid to touch it. But even if we know exactly what came from

Christ, it is in perpetual process of depravation and needs to be restored; it is in process of being narrowed and needs to be enlarged, or rather, in any case, needs to be enlarged, if it is to comprehend the world. There is a fallen Christianity if there is a fallen man, and man is always falling.

(*Life*, ii. 85.)

II

ST. PAUL AND HIS MISSION

The Conversion of St. Paul

THE spiritual combat, in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which terminates with the words, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' is the description, in a figure, of the Apostle's journey to Damascus. Almost in a moment he passed from darkness to light. Nothing could be more different or contrasted than his after-life and his former life. In his own language he might be described as cut in two by the sword of the Spirit; his present and previous states were like good and evil, light and darkness, life and death. It accords with what we know of human feelings, that this previous state should have a kind of terror for him, and should be presented to his mind, not as it appeared at the time when he 'thought, verily, that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth,' but as it afterwards seemed, when he counted himself to be the least of the Apostles, because twenty years before he had persecuted the Church of God; when he was amazed at the goodness of God in rescuing the chief of sinners. The life which he had once led was 'the law.'

He thought of it, indeed, sometimes as the inspired word, the language of which he was beginning to invest with a new meaning; but more often as an ideal form of evil, the chain by which he had been bound, the prison in which he was shut up. And long after his conversion the shadow of the law seemed to follow him at a distance, and threatened to overcast his heaven; when, with a sort of inconsistency for one assured of 'the crown,' he speaks of the trouble of spirit which overcame him, and of the sentence of death in himself. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 284–5.)

Changes of Character

The gifts of God to man have ever some reference to natural disposition. He who becomes the servant of God does not thereby cease to be himself. Often the transition is greater in appearance than in reality, from the suddenness of its manifestation. There is a kind of rebellion against self and nature and God, which, through the mercy of God to the soul, seems almost necessarily to lead to reaction. Persons have been worse than their fellow men in outward appearance, and yet there was within them the spirit of a child waiting to return home to their father's house. A change passes upon them which we may figure to ourselves, not only as the new man taking the place of the old, but as the inner man taking the place of the outer. So complex is human nature, that the very opposite to what we are has often an inexpressible power over us. Contrast is not only a law of association; it is also a principle of action. Many run from one extreme

to another, from licentiousness to the ecstasy of religious feeling, from religious feeling back to licentiousness, not without a 'fearful looking for of judgement.' If we could trace the hidden workings of good and evil, they would appear far less surprising and more natural than as they are seen by the outward eye. Our spiritual nature is without spring or chasm, but it has a certain play or freedom which leads very often to consequences the opposite of what we expect. It seems in some instances as if the same religious education had tended to contrary results; in one case to a devout life, in another to a reaction against it; sometimes to one form of faith, at other times to another. Many parents have wept to see the early religious training of their children draw them, by a kind of repulsion, to a communion or mode of opinion which is the extreme opposite of that in which they have been brought up. Let them have peace in the thought that it was not always in their power to fulfil the duty in which they seem to themselves to have failed. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 169.)

The Temperament of Religious Leaders

Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in concluding, that those who have undergone great religious changes have been of a fervid imaginative cast of mind; looking for more in this world than it was capable of yielding; easily touched by the remembrance of the past, or inspired by some ideal of the future. When with this has been combined a zeal for the good of their fellow men, they have become the heralds and champions of the religious move-

ments of the world. The change has begun within, but has overflowed without them. 'When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,' is the order of nature and of grace. In secret they brood over their own state; weary and profitless their soul fainteth within them. The religion they profess is a religion not of life to them, but of death; they lose their interest in the world, and are cut off from the communion of their fellow creatures. While they are musing, the fire kindles, and at the last—'they speak with their tongue.' Then pours forth irrepressibly the pent-up stream—'unto all and upon all' their fellow men; the intense flame of inward enthusiasm warms and lights up the world. First they are the evidence to others; then, again, others are the evidence to them. All religious leaders cannot be reduced to a single type of character; yet in all, perhaps, two characteristics may be observed; the first, great self-reflection; the second, intense sympathy with other men. They are not the creatures of habit or of circumstances, leading a blind life, unconscious of what they are; their whole effort is to realize their inward nature, and to make it palpable and visible to their fellows. Unlike other men who are confined to the circle of themselves or of their family, their affections are never straitened; they embrace with their love all men who are like-minded with them, almost all men too who are unlike them, in the hope that they may become like.

Such men have generally appeared at favourable conjunctures of circumstances, when the old was about to vanish away, and the new to appear. The world has yearned towards them, and they towards

the world. They have uttered what all men were feeling; they have interpreted the age to itself. But for the concurrence of circumstances, they might have been stranded on the solitary shore, they might have died without a follower or convert. But when the world has needed them, and God has intended them for the world, they are endued with power from on high; they use all other men as their instruments, uniting them to themselves.

Often such men have been brought up in the faith which they afterwards oppose, and a part of their power has consisted in their acquaintance with the enemy. They see other men, like themselves formerly, wandering out of the way in the idol's temple, amid a burdensome ceremonial, with prayers and sacrifices unable to free the soul. They lead them by the way themselves came to the home of Christ. Sometimes they represent the new as the truth of the old; at other times as contrasted with it, as life and death, as good and evil, as Christ and anti-Christ. They relax the force of habit, they melt the pride and fanaticism of the soul. They suggest to others their own doubts, they inspire them with their own hopes, they supply their own motives, they draw men to them with cords of sympathy and bonds of love; they themselves seem a sufficient stay to support the world. Such was Luther at the Reformation; such, in a higher sense, was the Apostle St. Paul.

There have been heroes in the world, and there have been prophets in the world. The first may be divided into two classes; either they have been men of strong will and character, or of great power and range of intellect; in a few instances, com-

bining both. They have been the natural leaders of mankind, compelling others by their acknowledged superiority as rulers and generals; or in the paths of science and philosophy, drawing the world after them by a yet more inevitable necessity. The prophet belongs to another order of beings: he does not master his thoughts; they carry him away. He does not see clearly into the laws of this world or the affairs of this world, but has a light beyond, which reveals them partially in their relation to another. Often he seems to be at once both the weakest and the strongest of men; the first to yield to his own impulses, the mightiest to arouse them in others. Calmness, or reason, or philosophy are not the words which describe the appeals which he makes to the hearts of men. He sways them to and fro rather than governs or controls them. He is a poet, and more than a poet, the inspired teacher of mankind; but the intellectual gifts which he possesses are independent of knowledge, or learning, or capacity; what they are much more akin to is the fire and subtlety of genius. He, too, for a time, has ruled kingdoms and even led armies; 'an Apostle, not of man, nor by men;' acting, not by authority or commission of any prince, but by an immediate inspiration from on high, communicating itself to the hearts of men.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 170–2.)

The Thorn in the Flesh

There have been those who, although deformed by nature, have worn the expression of a calm and heavenly beauty; in whom the flashing eye has attested the presence of thought in the poor withered

and palsied frame. There have been others, again, who have passed the greater part of their lives in extreme bodily suffering, who have, nevertheless, directed states or led armies, the keenness of whose intellect has not been dulled nor their natural force of mind abated. There have been those also on whose faces men have gazed 'as upon the face of an angel,' while they pierced or stoned them. Of such an one, perhaps, the Apostle himself might have gloried; not of those whom men term great or noble. He who felt the whole creation groaning and travailing together until now was not like the Greek drinking in the life of nature at every pore. He who through Christ was 'crucified to the world, and the world to him,' was not in harmony with nature, nor nature with him. The manly form, the erect step, the fullness of life and beauty, could not have gone along with such a consciousness as this, any more than the taste for literature and art could have consisted with the thought, 'not many wise, not many learned, not many mighty.' Instead of these we have the visage marred more than the sons of men, 'the Cross of Christ which was to the Greeks foolishness,' the thorn in the flesh, the marks in the body of the Lord Jesus.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 177.)

Knowledge of Mankind based on Love

Mysticism, or enthusiasm, or intense benevolence and philanthropy, seem to us, as they commonly are, at variance with worldly prudence and moderation. But in the Apostle these different and contrasted qualities are mingled and harmonized.

The mother watching over the life of her child has all her faculties aroused and stimulated; she knows almost by instinct how to say or to do the right thing at the right time; she regards his faults with mingled love and sorrow. So, in the Apostle, we seem to trace a sort of refinement or nicety of feeling, when he is dealing with the souls of men. All his knowledge of mankind shows itself for their sakes; and yet not that knowledge of mankind which comes from without, revealing itself by experience of men and manners, by taking a part in events, by the insensible course of years making us learn from what we have seen and suffered. There is another experience that comes from within, which begins with the knowledge of self, with the consciousness of our own weakness and infirmities; which is continued in love to others and in works of good to them; which grows by singleness and simplicity of heart. Love becomes the interpreter of how men think, and feel, and act; and supplies the place of, or passes into a worldly prudence wiser than, the prudence of this world. Such is the worldly prudence of St. Paul.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 179.)

Strength out of Weakness

The language of the Epistles often exercises an illusion on our minds when thinking of the primitive Church; individuals perhaps there were who truly partook of that light with which the Apostle encircled them; there may have been those in the Churches of Corinth, or Ephesus, or Galatia, who were living on earth the life of heaven. But

the ideal which fills the Apostle's mind has not, necessarily, a corresponding fact in the actual state of his converts. The beloved family of the Apostle, the Church of which such 'glorious things are told,' is often in tumult and disorder. His love is constantly a source of pain to him: he watches over them 'with a godly jealousy,' and finds them 'affecting others rather than himself.' They are always liable to be 'spoiled' by some vanity of philosophy, some remembrance of Judaism, which, like an epidemic, carries off whole Churches at once, and seems to exercise a fatal power over them. He is a father harrowed and agonized in his feelings; he loves more and suffers more than other men; he will not think, he cannot help thinking, of the ingratitude and insolence of his children; he tries to believe, he is persuaded, that all is well; he denounces, he forgives; he defends himself, he is ashamed of defending himself; he is the herald of his own deeds when others neglect or injure him; he is ashamed of this, too, and retires into himself, to be at peace with Christ and God. So we seem to read the course of the Apostle's thoughts in more than one passage of his writings, beginning with the heavenly ideal, and descending to the painful realities of actual life, especially at the close of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians—altogether, perhaps, the most characteristic picture of the Apostle's mind; and in the last words to the Galatians, 'Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.'

Great men (those, at least, who present to us the type of earthly greatness) are sometimes said

to possess the power of command, but not the power of entering into the feelings of others. They have no fear of their fellows, they are not affected by their opinions or prejudices, but neither are they always capable of immediately impressing them, or of perceiving the impression which their words or actions make upon them. Often they live in a kind of solitude on which other men do not venture to intrude; putting forth their strength on particular occasions, careless or abstracted about the daily concerns of life. Such was not the greatness of the Apostle St. Paul; not only in the sense in which he says that 'he could do all things through Christ,' but in a more earthly and human one, was it true, that his strength was his weakness and his weakness his strength. His dependence on others was also the source of his influence over them. His natural character was the type of that communion of the Spirit which he preached; the meanness of appearance which he attributes to himself, the image of that contrast which the Gospel presents to human greatness. Glorying and humiliation; life and death; a vision of angels strengthening him, the 'thorn in the flesh' rebuking him; the greatest tenderness, not without sternness; sorrows above measure, consolations above measure, are some of the contradictions which were reconciled in the same man. It is not a long life of ministerial success on which he is looking back a little before his death, where he says, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.' These words are sadly illustrated by another verse of the same Epistle, 'This thou knowest, that all they which

are in Asia be turned away from me' (2 Tim. i. 15). So when the contrast was at its height, he passed away, rejoicing in persecution also, and 'filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake.' Many, if not most, of his followers had forsaken him, and there is no certain memorial of the manner of his death.

Let us look once more a little closer at that 'visage marred' in his Master's service, as it appeared about three years before on a well-known scene. A poor aged man, worn by some bodily or mental disorder, who had been often scourged, and bore on his face the traces of indignity and sorrow in every form—such an one, led out of prison between Roman soldiers, probably at times faltering in his utterance, the creature, as he seemed to spectators, of nervous sensibility; yearning, almost with a sort of fondness, to save the souls of those whom he saw around him—spoke a few eloquent words in the cause of Christian truth, at which kings were awed, telling the tale of his own conversion with such simple pathos, that after-ages have hardly heard the like.

Such is the image, not which Christian art has delighted to consecrate, but which the Apostle has left in his own writings of himself; an image of true wisdom, and nobleness, and affection, but of a wisdom unlike the wisdom of this world; of a nobleness which must not be transformed into that of the heroes of the world; an affection which seemed to be as strong and as individual towards all mankind, as other men are capable of feeling towards a single person.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 181–4.)

III

PROPHECY

Old Testament Chronology

It were much to be wished that we could agree upon a chronological arrangement of the Old Testament, which would approach more nearly to the true order in which the books were written, than that in which they have been handed down to us. Such an arrangement would throw great light on the interpretation of prophecy. At present, we scarcely resist the illusion exercised upon our minds by 'four prophets the greater, followed by twelve prophets the less'; some of the latter being of a prior date to any of the former. Even the distinction of the Law and the Prophets as well as of the Psalms and the Prophets leads indirectly to a similar error. For many elements of the prophetical spirit enter into the Law, and legal precepts are repeated by the Prophets. The continuity of Jewish history is further broken by the Apocrypha. The four centuries before Christ were as fruitful of hopes and struggles and changes of thought and feeling in the Jewish people as any preceding period of their existence as a nation, perhaps more so. And yet we piece together the Old and New Testament as if

the interval were blank leaves only. Few, if any, English writers have ever attempted to form a conception of the growth of the spirit of prophecy, from its first beginnings in the Law itself, as it may be traced in the lives and characters of Samuel and David, and above all, of Elijah and his immediate successor; as it reappears a few years later, in the written prophecies respecting the house of Israel, and the surrounding nations (not even in the oldest of the prophets, without reference to Messiah's kingdom); or again after the carrying away of the ten tribes, as it concentrates itself in Judah, uttering a sadder and more mournful cry in the hour of captivity, yet in the multitude of sorrows increasing the comfort; the very dispersion of the people widening the prospect of Christ's kingdom, as the nation 'is cut short in righteousness,' God being so much the nearer to those who draw near to Him.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 134–5.)

Transition from the Nation to the Individual

In the earlier books of the Old Testament, the whole people is bound up together for good or for evil. In the Law especially, there is no trace that particular tribes or individuals are to be singled out for the favour of God. Even their great men are not so much individuals as representatives of the whole people. They serve God as a nation; as a nation they go astray. If, in the earlier times of Jewish history, we suppose an individual good man living 'amid an adulterous and crooked generation,' we can scarcely imagine the relation in which he would stand to the blessings and cursings of the

Law. Would the righteous perish with the wicked? 'That be far from thee, O Lord.' Yet 'prosperity, the blessing of the Old Testament,' was bound up with the existence of the nation. Gradually the germ of the new dispensation begins to unfold itself; the bands which held the nation together are broken in pieces; a fragment only is preserved, a branch, in the Apostle's language, cut off from the patriarchal stem, to be the beginning of another Israel.

The passage quoted by St. Paul in the eleventh chapter of the Romans is the first indication of this change in God's mode of dealing with His people. The prophet Elijah wanders forth into the wilderness to lay before the Lord the iniquities of the people: 'The children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword.' 'But what,' we may ask with the Apostle, 'saith the answer of God to him?' Not 'They are corrupt, they are altogether become abominable,' but 'Yet I have seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.' The whole people were not to be regarded as one; there were a few who still preserved, amid the general corruption, the worship of the true God.

The marked manner in which the answer of God is introduced, the contrast of the 'still small voice' with the thunder, the storm, and the earthquake, the natural symbols of the presence of God in the Law—the contradiction of the words spoken to the natural bent of the Prophet's mind, and the greatness of Elijah's own character—all tend to stamp this passage as marking one of the epochs of prophecy. The solitude of the Prophet and his separation in 'the mount of God,' from the places in which 'men

ought to worship,' are not without meaning. There had not always 'been this proverb in the house of Israel'; but from this time onwards it is repeated again and again. We trace the thought of a remnant to be saved in captivity, or to return from captivity, through a long succession of prophecies—Hosea, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel;—it is the text of almost all the Prophets, passing, as a familiar word, from the Old Testament to the New. The voice uttered to Elijah was the beginning of this new Revelation.

Coincident with the promise of a remnant is the precept, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' which, in modern language, opposes the moral to the ceremonial law. It is another and the greatest step onward towards the spiritual dispensation. Moral and religious truths hang together; no one can admit one of them in the highest sense, without admitting a principle which involves the rest. He who acknowledged that God was a God of mercy and not of sacrifice, could not long have supposed that He dealt with nations only, or that He raised men up for no other end but to be vessels of His wrath or monuments of His vengeance. For a time there might be 'things too hard for him,' clouds resting on his earthly tabernacle, when he 'saw the ungodly in such prosperity'; yet had he knowledge enough, as he 'went into the sanctuary of God,' and confessed himself to be 'a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth.'

It is in the later Prophets that the darkness begins to be dispelled and the ways of God justified to man. Ezekiel is above all others the teacher of this 'new commandment.' The familiar words,

'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive,' are the theme of a great part of this wonderful book. Other Prophets have more of poetical beauty, a deeper sense of Divine things, a tenderer feeling of the mercies of God to His people; none teach so simply this great moral lesson, to us the first of all lessons. On the eve of the captivity, and in the midst of it, when the hour of mercy is past, and no image is too loathsome to describe the iniquities of Israel, still the Prophet does not forget that the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked: 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, as I live, saith the Lord, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness' (xiv. 20). 'Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant; and they shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done, saith the Lord' (ver. 22, 23).

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 148–50.)

The Prophets and the New Dispensation

Every saviour or helper of mankind has a time of suffering as well as of glory, a time in which God seems to have forsaken him, and the meanness or the indifference or the wickedness of mankind are too much for him, and a time when the multitude cry 'Hosanna' before him, or he himself in his own inmost soul has a more present vision of a kingdom not of this world. This double thread runs alike through the Prophets and the Gospels. Only what is more outward and visible in the Old Testament

becomes more inward and spiritual in the New. The kingdom of God is not the conversion of surrounding nations or the subjugation of them to the God of Israel, but 'the kingdom of God is within you.' There, in the heart of man, its struggle is to be maintained, its victory won. It does not seek to incorporate the kingdoms of the world, but is rather in antagonism with them. The faithful believer feels the dead weight of sin and of the world, but in himself and in relation to God he is free and lord of all things. Take as the highest expression of what I am saying the remarkable words of St. Paul in 2 Cor. vi: 'As deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.' Or, again, the description of the spiritual conflict in Rom. vii: 'The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am! . . . I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

Of this spiritual conflict there is no trace in the Prophets. Neither do they ever speak of God taking up His abode in the hearts of men. Their relation to Him is an external one like that of subjects to a king. They see Him sitting on a throne high and lifted up. They cannot be said to reconcile God to man, or to bridge the chasm which separates them. He is the Sun of their life, and they seem to fear that when their breath passes away the sunshine in which they have lived may be withdrawn from them. They utter His commands; occasionally, awake or in a dream, they hear His voice; but they do not hold communion with Him.

He is clothed in the greatness of nature, which like the cherubim veils His face from them. He is still the God of the Jewish race, though in the distance the Prophet sees that other races will begin, or are beginning, to partake of the mercies granted to the Israelites. The misery and evil of the people are present; and they are already experiencing the just judgements of God. But the hope of good is future—in *those* days, in the *latter* days, at some unknown and distant time; whereas in the New Testament the good is present and immediate; within the reach of every one, if he will renounce himself and follow Christ. For these *are* 'the latter days,' and 'this day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears.'

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 81–3.)

The Language of the Old Testament

The religious ideas of one age require to be translated into the religious ideas of another. The religious thoughts of one age may become the feelings of another; the religious truth of one age may become the religious poetry of another. The language of the Old Testament is personal and individual, speaking heart to heart as one man speaks to another, telling of a God who is indeed always described by the Psalmist or Prophet as the God of justice and of truth, and yet asserts His despotic power to pull down one man and put up another. And here the error of which I was speaking is liable to creep in. For some of this language might lead us to suppose that God, like men, has His favourites, that He prefers one man or one nation to another, that

He encourages one undertaking and throws difficulties in the way of another. Ages upon ages pass away before men attain even to that degree of clearness in their ideas of God of which the human mind is really capable. And I think that we must recognize that the Hebrew Prophets and Psalmists do present to us an imperfect and partial conception of the Divine Nature compared with that which our own hearts and consciences, enlightened by Christianity and the study of history and nature, give us in the present day. There must be a silent correction of the familiar words of the Psalmist when we use them, if they are to express the truth for us. For we know that God is not sitting, as He is represented in some pictures, on the circle of the heavens, but that His temple is the heart of man; we know that He is not the God of one nation only, but of all mankind; we know that God helps those who help themselves. Except men build the house, the Lord will not build it; except the watchmen keep guard in the city, the Lord will not guard it. In everything the means are to be taken first, the laws of nature are to be studied and consulted:—then, and only then, the blessing of God follows us, and, in the language of the Psalmist, 'the Lord prospers our handiwork.'

(*College Sermons*, 42–4.)

The Twofold Lesson of Goodness and Severity

In these 'terrors of the day of the Lord,' of which the Prophets speak, the fortunes of the Jewish people mingle with another vision of a more universal

judgement, and it has been usual to have recourse to the double senses of prophecy to separate the one from the other, an instrument of interpretation which has also been applied to the New Testament for the same purpose. Not in this way could the Prophet or Apostle themselves have conceived them. To them they were not two, but one; not 'double one against the other,' or separable into the figure and the thing signified. For the figure is in early ages the mode of conception also. More true would it be to say that the judgements of God on the Jewish people were an anticipation or illustration of His dealings with the world generally. If a separation is made at all, let us rather separate the accidents of time and place from that burning sense of the righteousness of God, which, somewhere we cannot tell where, at some time we cannot tell when, must and will have retribution on evil; which has this other note of its Divine character, that in judgement it remembers mercy, pronouncing no endless penalty or irreversible doom, even upon the house of Israel. This twofold lesson of goodness and severity speaks to us as well as to the Jews. Better still to receive the words of prophecy as we have them, and to allow the feeling which it utters to find its way to our hearts, without stopping to mark out what was not separated in the Prophet's own mind and cannot therefore be divided by us.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 141–2.)

Use and Misuse of Prophecy

The fulfilment of prophecy has been sought for in a series of events which have been sometimes

bent to make them fit, and one series of events has frequently taken the place of another. Even the passing circumstances of to-day or yesterday, at the distance of about two thousand years, and as many miles, which are but shadows flitting on the mountains compared with the deeper foundations of human history, are thought to be within the range of the Prophet's eye. And it may be feared that, in attempting to establish a claim which, if it could be proved, might be made also for heathen oracles and prophecies, commentators have sometimes lost sight of those great characteristics which distinguish Hebrew prophecy from all other professing revelations of other religions: (1) the sense of the truthfulness, and holiness, and loving-kindness of the Divine Being, with which the Prophet is as one possessed, which he can no more forget or doubt than he can cease to be himself; (2) their growth, that is, their growing perception of the moral nature of the revelation of God to man, apart from the commandments of the law or the privileges of the house of Israel. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 135.)

The Development of Prophecy

The truth of God comes into contact with the world, clothing itself in human feelings, revealing the lesson of historical events. But human feelings and the lesson of events vary, and in this sense the prophetic lesson varies too. Even in the workings of our own minds we may perceive this; those who think much about themselves and God cannot but be conscious of great changes and transitions of feeling at different periods of life. We are the

creatures of impressions and associations; and although Providence has not made our knowledge of himself dependent on these impressions, He has allowed it to be coloured by them. We cannot say that in the hours of prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in poverty and wealth, our sense of God's dealings with us is absolutely the same; still less, that all our prayers and aspirations have received the answer that we wished or expected. And sometimes the thoughts of our own hearts go before to God; at other times, the power of God seems to anticipate the thoughts of our hearts. And sometimes, in looking back at our past lives, it seems as if God had done everything; at other times, we are conscious of the movement of our own will. The wide world itself also, and the political fortunes of our country, have been enveloped in the light or darkness which rested on our individual soul.

Especially are we liable to look at religious truth under many aspects, if we live amid changes of religious opinions, or are witnesses of some revival or reaction in religion, or supposing our lot to be cast in critical periods of history, such as extend the range and powers of human nature, or certainly enlarge our experience of it. Then the germs of new truths will subsist side by side with the remains of old ones; and thoughts, that are really inconsistent, will have a place together in our minds, without our being able to perceive their inconsistency. The inconsistency will be traced by posterity; they will remark that up to a particular point we saw clearly; but that no man is beyond his age—there was a circle which we could not pass. And some

one living in our own day may look into the future with 'eagle eye'; he may weigh and balance with a sort of omniscience the moral forces of the world, perhaps with something too much of confidence that the right will ultimately prevail even on earth; and after ages may observe that his predictions were not always fulfilled or not fulfilled at the time he said.

Such general reflections may serve as an introduction to what at first appears an anomaly in prophecy—that it has not one, but many lessons; and that the manner in which it teaches those lessons is through the alternations of the human soul itself. There are failings of prophecy, just as there are failings in our own anticipations of the future. And sometimes when we had hoped to be delivered it has seemed good to God to afflict us still. But it does not follow that religion is therefore a cunningly devised fable, either now or then. Neither the faith of the people, nor of the Prophet, in the God of their fathers, is shaken because the prophecies are not realized before their eyes; because 'the vision,' as they said, 'is delayed'; because in many cases events seem to occur which make it impossible that it should be accomplished. A true instinct still enables them to separate the prophets of Jehovah from the numberless false prophets with whom the land swarmed; they are gifted with the 'same discernment of spirits' which distinguished Micaiah from the four hundred whom Ahab called. The internal evidence of the true prophet we are able to recognize in the written prophecies also. In the earliest as well as the latest of them there is the same spirit one and continuous, the same witness of

the invisible God, the same character of the Jewish people, the same law of justice and mercy in the dealings of Providence with respect to them, the same 'walking with God' in the daily life of the prophet himself.

'Novum Testamentum in vetere latet' has come to be a favourite word among theologians, who have thought they saw in the truths of the Gospel the original design as well as the evangelical application of the Mosaical law. With a deeper meaning, it may be said that prophecy grows out of itself into the Gospel. Not, as some extreme critics have conceived, that the facts of the Gospel history are but the crystallization of the imagery of prophecy. Say, rather, that the river of the water of life is beginning again to flow. The Son of God himself is 'that Prophet'—the Prophet, not of one nation only, but of all mankind, in whom the particularity of the old prophets is finally done away, and the ever-changing form of the 'servant in whom My soul delighteth' at last finds rest. St. Paul, too, is a prophet who has laid aside the poetical and authoritative garb of old times, and is wrapped in the rhetorical or dialectical one of his own age. The language of the old prophets comes unbidden into his mind; it seems to be the natural expression of his own thoughts. Separated from Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah by an interval of about eight hundred years, he finds their words very near to him 'even in his mouth and his heart;' that is the word which he preached. When they spoke of forgiveness of sins, of non-imputation of sins, of a sudden turning to God, what did this mean but righteousness by faith? When they said 'I will

have mercy, and not sacrifice,' here also was imaged the great truth, that salvation was not of the law. If St. Paul would have 'no man judged for a new moon or sabbath,' the prophets of old time had again and again said in the name of Jehovah, 'Your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with.' Like the elder prophets, he came not 'to build up a temple made with hands,' but to teach a moral truth; like them he went forth alone, and not in connexion with the Church at Jerusalem. His calling is to be Apostle of the Gentiles; they also sometimes pass beyond the borders of Israel, to receive Egypt and Assyria into covenant with God.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 137–40.)

The Interpretation of Prophecy

Good and evil seem often to lie together flat upon the world's surface. At other times they start up, like armed men, and prepare for the last struggle. There is a state in the individual soul, in which it has entered into rest, and has its conversation in heaven, and is a partaker of the kingdom of God. There is a state also in which it is divided between two, not unconscious of good, but overpowered by evil, living in what St. Paul terms the body of death. There is a third state in which it is neither conscious of good nor overpowered by evil, but in which it 'leads the life of all men' acting under the influence of habit, law, opinion. All these three states have their parallels in the history of the world. In all of them, whether in the individual or in the world, whether

arising out of the purpose of God or the nature of man, there sometimes seems to be a kind of necessity which will not suffer them to be other than they are. The first is that state for which the believer looks when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and Christ. The second is that state of the world, seen also to him, but unseen to men in general, in which, in the language of prophecy, 'the wicked is revealed,' in which the elements of good and evil separate and decompose themselves, in anticipation of the final judgement. The third is that fixed order of the world in which we live, which surrounds us on every side with its restraints, social, legal, moral, which, if it be not very good, is not very evil; which 'letteth and will let' as long as human nature lasts. Such a 'let' to the evil of men was the Roman Empire; such a 'let,' even when it had lost its inspired character, was the Law of the Jews. Whether either of these, or both of them combined in the same way that in the Book of Revelation Rome and Jerusalem combine to form the image of the last enemy, suggested to the Apostle the thought of 'that which let'; whether the political order of the world, which was typified by them, seemed to him for a time to interpose itself against the manifestation of the man of sin, is uncertain. Such is a natural adaptation for us to make of the words of the prophecy; it is also a consistent interpretation of them when translated out of the symbolism of Ezekiel and Daniel into more general language. To suppose that there is to be some greater deluge of evil than any that has already poured over the world, at the fall of the Roman

Empire, or in the tenth century, some louder shriek of the human race in its agony than at the destruction of Jerusalem, to be heard again at the expiration of two thousand years, adds nothing to the credibility of the Apostle. Least of all can we imagine him to refer to a 'gigantic' development of the human intellect, which is at present believed to be held with a chain by the governments of mankind. Such opinions draw us away from the healthy atmosphere of history and experience into the unseen future; they project to an unimaginable distance, what to the Apostle was near and present. No test can be applied to them; their truth or falsehood, when we are in our graves, we shall never know. They gain no additional witness from the willingness of their authors to stake the inspiration of Scripture on the historic certainty of the event. So long as we delight to trace coincidences, or to make pictures in religion; so long as the human mind continues to prefer the extraordinary to the common, such interpretations of prophecy, in forms more or less idealized or refined, adapted to different ages or capacities, will never fail. But the Spirit of prophecy in every age lives not in signs and wonders, but in the divine sense of good and evil in our own hearts, and in the world around us.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 101–3.)

The Causes of Progress

Looking back on the history of the world, we observe long periods in which mankind appear to have been stationary. Great empires like Egypt or

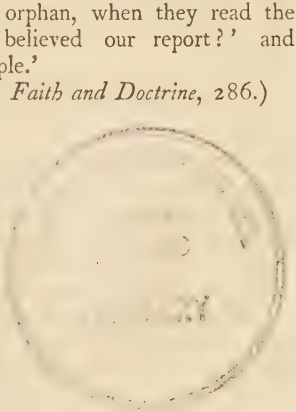
China remain the same for two thousand or for three thousand years; the external framework of their institutions exercises a paralysing influence on their life and spirit; their religions continue merely because they are ancient, their works of art are always cast in the same form, their laws and customs are like chains too strong for the puny arm of the individual to break. Still more true is all this, as far as we can conjecture, of prehistoric times about which we know so little. Though there were wars and migrations among primitive men, they remained for the most part in the same condition; there was hardly more progress among them than among the animals. Even in our own age of industrial and political activity we become unexpectedly aware of times of reaction: the force which seemed strong enough to revolutionize a world is suddenly arrested and brought to a stop in the midst of its career. Countries, like individuals, are always in danger of falling back into apathy and repose. So that, if some persons speak to us of a law of progress in human affairs, others will seem rather to discern in them a law of rest; not everything going forward, but everything standing still—not 'the new is ever entwined with the old,' but 'there is nothing new under the sun.' And certainly we must admit that the times of progress and improvement have been few and far between: the day-spring from on high has visited mankind at intervals. Every individual who has sought to do good in his generation has probably made the reflection: 'How little impression he has left upon the forces arrayed against him! hardly more than the husbandman on the solid framework of the earth.'

Yet there have been also times in which the fountains of the deep may be said to have been broken up; and new lights have dawned upon men, new truths about politics, about morality, about religion, which have become the inheritance of after ages. In general the progress of mankind has not been gradual, but sudden, like the burst of summer in some ice-bound clime. Still less has it been a common effort of the whole human race. If we take away two nations from the history of the world; if we imagine further that the six greatest among the sons of men were blotted out, or had never been, the peoples of the earth would still be 'sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.' The two nations were among the fewest of all people: scarcely in their most flourishing period together amounting to a hundredth part of the human race. The golden age of either of them can hardly be said to extend over two or three centuries. The nations themselves were not good for much; but single men among them have been the teachers, not only of their own, but of all ages and countries. If the Greek philosophers had never existed, is it too much to say that the very nature of the human mind would have been different? We can hardly tell when or how the sciences would have come into being; many elements of religion as well as of law would have been wanting; the history of nations would have changed. So mighty has been the influence of two or three men in thought and speculation—the world has gone after them. (*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 282–4.)

The Living Power of the Jewish Prophets

If the logical and intellectual framework of the human mind may be said to have been constructed by the Greek philosophers, the moral feelings of men have been deepened and strengthened, and also softened and almost created by the Jewish prophets. In modern times we hardly like to acknowledge the full force of their words, lest they should prove subversive to society. And so we explain them away or spiritualize them, and convert what is figurative into what is literal, and what is literal into what is figurative. And still, after all our interpretation or misinterpretation, whether due to a false theology or to imperfect knowledge of the original language, the force of the words remains; and a light of heavenly truth and love streams from them even now (more than 2500 years after they were first uttered) to the uneducated and ignorant, to the widow or the orphan, when they read the words, 'Who hath believed our report?' and 'Comfort ye my people.'

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 286.)



IV

THE EARLY CHURCH

Development of the Church

* The history of the Christian Church seems to show that there is no difficulty in creating a religious organization which may spread far and wide among the countries of the world. There are few or rather no traces of Episcopacy in the New Testament, but at the end of the second century the Episcopal fabric is complete; the Church is one and indivisible, and this is not a matter of controversy but of history. A thousand years later the tendency to unity has been carried further still, the republic of Christendom has become an empire, continuing for ages the rival or superior of the kingdoms of the world. And when at last the branches of the great tree have been lopped off on this side and on that, there is the same inherent vitality still, the old organization survives, claiming a higher power and a diviner right, while the new also becomes a tree aspiring to a less arbitrary rule, but still able to assert an authority more than human.

The want of organization has never been the want of the Christian world. Churches, like nations, have had no difficulty in making governments for

themselves. The danger has rather been that too much union might be the parent of division; and that Churches, like nations, might become aggressive towards those who are without. There has also been a danger that they might assign too great a value to the outward signs which were also the limits of their communion, making the visible prevail over the invisible, supposing that because they had power they had also right, or sometimes that the spirit of party was the Spirit of God. Nor, again, does there seem to have been any difficulty in developing and defining Christian doctrine. How the simple words of Christ, 'Believe on Me,' grew into a vast system set forth in hard and technical terms which the first teachers of the word could not even have understood, is a strange reflection which, living eighteen centuries afterwards, we are unable adequately to realize. To us they seem to have gone into too much detail, and that on subjects which transcend human thought and language. (*Unpublished.*)

Development of Doctrine

The history of theology is the history of the intellectual life of the Christian Church. All bodies of Christians, Protestant as well as Catholic, have tended to imagine that they are in the same stage of religious development as the first believers. But the Church has not stood still any more than the world; we may trace the progress of doctrine as well as the growth of philosophical opinion. The thoughts of men do not pass away without leaving an impress, in religion, any more than in

politics or literature. The form of more than one article of faith in our own day is assignable to the effort of mind of some great thinker of the Nicene or mediaeval times. The received interpretation of texts of Scripture may not unfrequently be referred to the application of them first made in periods of controversy. Neither is it possible in any reformation of the Church to return exactly to the point whence the divergence began. The pattern of Apostolical order may be restored in externals; but the threads of the dialectical process are in the mind itself, and cannot be disposed of at once. It seems to be the nature of theology that while it is easy to add one definition of doctrine to another, it is hard to withdraw from any which have been once received. To believe too much is held to be safer than to believe too little, and the human intellect finds a more natural exercise in raising the superstructure than in examining the foundations. On the other hand, it is instructive to observe that there has always been an under-current in theology, the course of which has turned towards morality, and not away from it. There is a higher sense of truth and right now than in the Nicene Church—after than before the Reformation. The laity in all Churches have moderated the extremes of the clergy. There may also be remarked a silent correction in men's minds of statements which have not ceased to appear in theological writings.

The study of the doctrinal development of the Christian Church has many uses. First, it helps us to separate the history of a doctrine from its truth, and indirectly also the meaning of Scripture from the new reading of it, which has been given

in many instances by theological controversy. It takes us away from the passing movement, and out of our own particular corner into a world in which we see religion on a larger scale and in truer proportions. It enables us to interpret one age to another, to understand our present theological position by its antecedents in the past; and perhaps to bind all together in the spirit of charity. Half the intolerance of opinion among Christians arises from ignorance; in history as in life, when we know others we get to like them. Logic too ceases to take us by force and make us believe. There is a pathetic interest and a kind of mystery in the long continuance and intensity of erroneous ideas on behalf of which men have been ready to die, which nevertheless were no better than the dreams or fancies of children. When we make allowance for differences in modes of thought, for the state of knowledge, and the conditions of the ecclesiastical society, we see that individuals have not been altogether responsible for their opinions; that the world has been bound together under the influence of the past; moreover, good men of all persuasions have been probably nearer to one another than they supposed, in doctrine as well as in life. It is the attempt to preserve or revive erroneous opinions in the present age, not their existence in former ages, that is to be reprobated. Lastly, the study of the history of doctrine is the end of controversy. For it is above controversy, of which it traces the growth, clearing away that part which is verbal only, and teaching us to understand that other part which is fixed in the deeper differences of human nature.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 340–2.)

Suddenness and Permanence of Early Conversions

If with ourselves the influence of Christianity is almost always gradual and imperceptible, with the first believers it was almost always sudden. There was no interval which separated the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, from the baptism of the three thousand. The eunuch of Candace paused for a brief space on a journey, and was then baptized into the name of Christ, which a few hours previously he had not so much as heard. There was no period of probation like that which, a century or two later, was appropriated to the instruction of the Catechumens. It was an impulse, an inspiration passing from the lips of one to a chosen few, and communicated by them to the ear and soul of listening multitudes. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof; as the lightning shineth from the one end of the heaven to the other; so, suddenly, fitfully, simultaneously, new thoughts came into their minds, not to one only, but to many, to whole cities almost at once. They were pricked with the sense of sin; they were melted with the love of Christ; their spiritual nature 'came again like the flesh of a little child.' And some, like St. Paul, became the very opposite of their former selves; from scoffers, believers; from persecutors, preachers; the thing that they were was so strange to them, that they could no longer look calmly on the earthly scene, which they hardly seemed to touch, which was already lighted up with the wrath and mercy of God. There were those among them

who 'saw visions and dreamed dreams,' who were 'caught up,' like St. Paul, 'into the third heaven,' or, like the twelve, 'spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.' And sometimes, as in the Thessalonian Church, the ecstasy of conversion led to strange and wild opinions, such as the daily expectation of Christ's coming. The 'round world' itself began to reel before them, as they thought of the things that were shortly to come to pass.

But however sudden were the conversions of the earliest believers, however wonderful the circumstances which attended them, they were not for that reason the less lasting or sincere. Though many preached 'Christ of contention,' though 'Demas forsook the Apostle,' there were few who, having once taken up the cross, turned back from 'the love of this present world.' They might waver between Paul and Peter, between the circumcision and the uncircumcision; they might give ear to the strange and bewitching heresies of the East; but there is no trace that many returned to 'those that were no gods,' or put off Christ; the impression of the truth that they had received was everlasting on their minds. Even sins of fornication and uncleanness, which from the Apostle's frequent warnings against them we must suppose to have lingered, as a sort of remnant of heathenism in the early Church, did not wholly destroy their inward relation to God and Christ. Though 'their last state might be worse than the first,' they could never return again to live the life of all men after having tasted 'the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come.'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 103–5.)

Regeneration

Imagine not infants, but crowds of grown-up persons already changed in heart and feelings; their 'life hidden with Christ and God,' losing their personal consciousness in the laver of regeneration; rising again from its depths into the light of heaven, in communion with God and nature; met as they rose from the bath with the white raiment, which is 'the righteousness of the saints,' and ever after looking back on that moment as the instant of their new birth, of the putting off of the old man, and the putting on of Christ. Baptism was to them the figure of death, burial, and resurrection all in one, the most apt expression of the greatest change that can pass upon man, like the sudden change into another life when we leave the body.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 291.)

The Transition from Judaism

Our conception of the Apostolical age is necessarily based on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul. It is in vain to search ecclesiastical writings for further information; the pages of Justin and Irenaeus supply only the evidence of their own deficiency. Confining ourselves, then, to the original sources, we cannot but be struck by the fact that, of the first eighteen years after the day of Pentecost, hardly any account is preserved to us in the Acts, and that to this scanty record no addition can be made from the Epistles of St. Paul. Isolated facts are narrated, but not events in their order and sequence: there is no general prospect of the Chris-

tian world. Churches are growing up everywhere: some the result of missions from Jerusalem, others of unknown origin; yet none of them standing in any definite relation to the Apostles of the circumcision. It seems as if we had already reached the second stage in the history of the Apostolic Church, without any precise knowledge of the first. That second period, if we terminate it with the supposed date of the Apostle's death, extends over about fourteen or fifteen years—years full of life, and growth, and vicissitude. Could the preceding period have been less so, or does it only appear to be so from the silence of history? Is it according to the analogy of human things, or of the workings of Divine power in the soul of man, that, during the first part of its existence, Christianity should have slumbered, and after fifteen years of inaction have suddenly gone forth to conquer the world? Or are we falling under that common historical illusion, that little happened in a time of which we know little?

And yet how are we to supply this lost history out of the single verse of the Acts (xi. 19), 'They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.' What reply is to be made to the inquiry respecting the origin of the Christian Church in the two cities which in after-ages were to exercise the greatest influence on its history, Alexandria and Rome? We cannot tell. Our slender materials only admit of being eked out by some general facts which do not fill up the void of details, but are of the greatest importance in illustrating the spirit and character of the earliest Christian

communities. Foremost among these facts is the dispersion of the Jews. The remark has been often made that the universality of the Roman Empire was itself a preparation for the universality of the Gospel, its very organization throughout the world being the image, as it may have been the model, of the external form of the Christian Church. But not less striking as an image of the external state of the earliest Christian communion is the dispersion of the ten tribes throughout the world, and not less worthy of observation as it was an inward preparation for Christianity is the universal diffusion of that religion, the spirit of which seemed at the time to be most narrow and contracted within itself, and at first sight most hostile to the whole human race. Of all religions in the world it was probably the only one capable of making proselytes—which had the force, as it had the will, to draw men within its circle. Literally, and not only in idea, 'the Law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ.' The compassing sea and land 'to make one proselyte' was not without its results. Seneca, who did not know, or at least has not told anything of the Christians, says of the Jews, 'Victoribus victi leges dederunt.' The Roman satirists were aware of their festivals, and speak of them in a way which implies not only converts to Judaism, but a degree of regard for their opinions. They had passed into a proverb in Horace's time for their zeal in bringing men over to their opinions (1 *Sat.* iv. 143). Philo mentions the suburb beyond the Tiber in which they were domiciled by Augustus, the greater number of the inhabitants of which are said to have been freedmen (*Leg. ad Caium*, 23.) Tacitus's account of their

origin is perhaps an unique attempt in a Roman writer to investigate the religious antiquities of an Eastern people, implying of itself, what it also explicitly states, the tendency towards them. No other religion had been sustained for centuries by contributions from the most remote parts of the empire to a common centre; contributions the very magnitude of which is ascribed to the zeal of numerous converts (Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 5; Cicero *pro Flacco*, c. 28). According to Josephus, whole tribes in the neighbourhood of Judea had submitted to the rite of circumcision (*Ant.* xiii. 9. 1; 11. 3; 15. 4). The women of Damascus in particular are mentioned as not trusted by their husbands in a massacre of the Jews, because they were 'favourable to the Jews' religion.' The Jews in Alexandria occupied two of the five quarters into which the city was divided: and the whole Jewish population of Egypt was rated by Philo at a million. Facts like these speak volumes for the importance and influence of the Jews.

In one sense it is true that the Jewish religion seemed already about to expire. To us, looking back from the vantage ground of the Gospel, nothing is clearer than that it contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. 'The Law and the Prophets were until John, and now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Before Christ—after Christ—this is the great landmark that divides Judaism from Christianity, while for a few years longer the devoted nation, already within the coils of its own destiny, lingers about its ancient seat. It was otherwise to its contemporaries. To them

the Jewish people were not declining, but growing. There seemed to be no end to its wealth and influence. The least of all peoples in itself, it was a nation within a nation in every city. In the wreck of the heathen religions, Judaism alone remained unchanged. Nor is there anything strange in its retaining undiminished this power over the human mind, when its own national glory had already departed. Its objects of faith were not lessened, but magnified by distance. It contained in itself that inward life which other religions were seeking for, and for the want of which they expired. It could not but communicate to others the belief in the unity of God, which had sunk for ages into the heart of the race;—to the educated Greek 'one guess among many,'—to the Israelite a necessary truth. It formed a sort of meeting-point of East and West, which in the movement of either towards the other naturally exercised a singular influence. Many elements of Greek cultivation had insensibly passed into the mind of the Jewish people, as of other Asiatic nations, before the reaction of the Maccabean wars; cities with Greek names covered the land: even after that time the rugged Hebrew feeling was confined within narrow limits. The Gospel as it passed from the lips of our Lord and the Twelve had not far to go in Palestine itself before it came in contact with the Greek world. In other countries the diffusion of the Greek Version of the Old Testament is a proof that a Hellenized Judaism was growing up everywhere. The Alexandrian philosophy offered a link with heathen literature and mythology. Judaism was no longer isolated, but wandering far and wide. Cling-

ing to its belief in Jehovah and abating nothing of its national pride, it was nevertheless capable of assuming to itself new phases without losing its essential character, of dropping its more repulsive features and entering into and penetrating the better heathen mind both of East and West.

The heads of many subjects of inquiry are summed up in these reflections, which lead us round to the question from which we started, 'Whether to the Gentiles also the gate of the New Testament was through the Old?' And they suggest the answer to the question, that 'so it was,' not because the minds of the first teachers were unable to rise above the 'rudiments of the Law,' but because the soil for Christianity among the Gentiles was itself prepared in Judaism. It was the natural growth of the Gospel in the world as it then was. The better life of the Jewish people passed into the earliest Christian Church; the meaning of prophecy was lost to the Jew and found to the believer in Christ. And the facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles represent the outward side of this inward tendency: it was the Jewish proselyte who commonly became the Christian convert. Such were Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch, and the deputy Sergius Paulus, who 'of his own accord desired to hear the word of God.' The teachers themselves wore the habit of Jews, and they came appealing to the authority of the Old Testament. That garb and form and manner which we insensibly drop in thinking of the early teachers of Christianity could not have failed to impress its Jewish character on their first hearers. It would be their first conception of the Gospel, that it was a kind of Judaism to which they were

predisposed by the same kind of feelings which led them towards Judaism itself.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 208–12.)

The Fullness of Time

Shall we say that great events arise from antecedents, or without them? in the fullness of time, or out of due time? by sudden crises, or with long purpose and preparation? It is impossible for us to view the great changes of the world under any of these aspects exclusively. The spread of the Roman Empire, the fall of the Jewish nation, the decline of the heathen religions—Jewish prophecy, Greek philosophy, these are the natural links which connect the Gospel with the actual state of mankind, the causes, humanly speaking, of its propagation, and the soil in which it grew. But there is something besides of which no account can be given. The external circumstances or conditions of events do not explain history any more than life. Why the Gospel came into the world in a particular form, or at a particular time, is a question which is not reached by any analysis of this sort.

This Providential time is what the Apostle calls 'the fullness of time,' not because in the modern way of reflection the causes and antecedents of the Gospel were already in being, but because it was the time appointed of God, the mysterious hour when the great revelation was to be made. It is when contemplated from within, not from without, that it appears to him to be the fullness of time; standing in the same relation to the world at large, that the moment of conversion does to the individual soul. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 153.)

Relation of Christianity to Nature and History

The traveller in Greece or in Asia who has followed in the footsteps of the Apostles, who has beheld with his own eyes the same scenes that were looked upon by St. Paul and St. John, is loth to believe that he can add nothing to our knowledge of the Seven Churches, or of the labours of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Those scenes have a never-dying interest; but it is for themselves alone. Fain would we imagine the sight upon which St. Paul looked when, standing on Mars' Hill, he beheld 'the city wholly given to idolatry'; fain would we see in fancy the desert rocks of the sea-girt isle, on which St. John gazed when he wrote the Apocalypse. But we must not transfer to the ancient world our own impressions of nature or of art. Of that sensibility to the beauties of scenery, or of that romantic recollection of the past, which are such remarkable characteristics of our own day, there is no trace in the writings of the New Testament, nor any reason to suppose that they had a place in the minds of its authors.

Taking the other aspect of the subject, we are far from denying that the birth of Christianity is the most interesting of historical facts; but its interest is also for itself alone: it is not derived from any political influence which the Gospel at first exercised, or from any political causes which may have favoured or given rise to it. In the vastness of the Roman world, it is as a small isolated spot, the light, as it were, of a candle, which must be sought for, not in the court of

Caesar, nor amid the factions of Jerusalem, but in the upper chamber in which the disciples met when 'the number of the names together was about an hundred and twenty, and the doors were shut for fear of the Jews.' It is one of those minute facts which escape the eye of the contemporary historian, and must not be drawn before its time into the circle of political events. Its first greatness is the very contrast which it presents with the greatness of history. Strange it is to think of the contemporary heathen world, of Tiberius at Capreae, of the Roman senate, of the solid framework of the Roman Empire itself. But when this first feeling of surprise has passed away, we become aware that the page of Tacitus, or even of Josephus, adds nothing worth speaking of to our knowledge of the earliest Christianity. The most remarkable fact supplied by them is their unconsciousness of its importance. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 19–20.)

The Persecution of the First Preachers

All ages which have witnessed a revival of religious feeling have witnessed also the outbreak of religious passions; the pure light of the one becomes the spark by which the other is kindled. Reasons of state sometimes create a faint and distant suspicion of a new faith; the feelings of the mass rise to overwhelm it.

Allowing for the difference of times and seasons, the feelings of the Roman governors were not altogether unlike those with which the followers of John Wesley, in the last century, might have been regarded by the magistrates of an English

town. And making still greater allowance for the malignity and depth of the passions by which men were agitated as the old religions were breaking up, a parallel not less just might be drawn also between the feelings of the multitude. There was in both cases a kind of sympathy by which the lower class were attracted towards the new teachers. Natural feeling suggested that these men had come for their good; they were grateful for the love shown of them, and for the ministration to their temporal wants. There was a time when it was said of the first believers, that they were in favour with all the people (Acts ii. 47), and that 'all men glorified God for that which was done' (iv. 21). But at the preaching of Stephen the scene changes; the deep irreconcilable hostility of the two principles is beginning to be felt; 'it is not peace, but a sword;' not 'I am come to fulfil the law,' but 'not one stone shall be left upon another.'

The moment this was clearly perceived, not only would the far-sighted jealousy of chief priests and rulers be alarmed at the preaching of the Apostles; but the very instincts of the multitude itself would rise at them. More than anything that we have witnessed in modern times of religious intolerance, would be the feeling against those who sought to relax the bond of circumcision as enemies to their country, their religion, and their God. But there was another aspect of the new religion, which served to bring home these feelings even yet more nearly. It was the disruption of the family. As our Lord foretold, the father was against the son, the son against the father, the mother-in-law against the daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law against her

mother-in-law. A new power had arisen in the world, which seemed to cut across and dissever natural affections (Matt. x. 34). Consider what is implied in the words 'of believing women not a few'; what animosities of parents, and brethren, and husbands! what hatreds, and fears, and jealousies! An unknown tie, closer than that of kindred, drew away the individuals of a family, and joined them to an external society. It was not only that they were members of another Church, or attendants on a separate worship. The difference went beyond this. In the daily intercourse of life, at every meal, the unbelieving brother or sister was conscious of the presence of the unclean. It was an injury not readily to be forgotten, or forgiven its authors, the greatest, perhaps, which could be offered in this world. The fanatic priest, led on by every personal and religious motive—the man of the world, caring for none of those things, but not the less resenting the intrusion on the peace of his home—the craftsman, fearing for his gains—the accursed multitude, knowing not the law, but irritated at the very notion of this mysterious society of such real though hidden strength—would all work together towards the overthrow of those who seemed to them to be turning upside down the political, religious, and social order of the world. The utterance of this instinct of dislike is heard in the words, 'These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans' (Acts xvi. 20, 21). (Compare, to complete the picture, the description in the previous verses of the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, who cried

after Paul many days, 'These men are the servants of the most High God.')

These considerations, though based only on general principles of human nature, are necessary to make us understand the undercurrent of the Apostolical history, as well as to form a just estimate of the question which we are considering. The actual persecution of the Roman government was slight, but what may be termed the social persecution and the illegal violence employed towards the first disciples unceasing. 'Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one;' who would know or care what went on in the Jewish quarter of a great city? How precarious must have been their fate who, with the passions of men arrayed against them, had no protection from the law! They were liable to be persecuted by the Jews, to suffer persecution as Jews, to arm the feelings of all nations against themselves as the professors of an unnational religion. Little reflection is necessary to fill up the details of that image of peril, which the Apostle presents to us in all his Epistles. It is the same vision which is again held up to us in the Book of the Revelation, of the common tribulation of St. John and the Churches, of the sufferings that were to come upon the Church of Smyrna, of the faithfulness of Pergamos in the days when the martyr Antipas was slain, of the two witnesses, and of the souls beneath the altar, saying 'How long?' It is the same which reappears in the earliest ecclesiastical history, in the narrative of Hegesippus respecting James the Just. It is the state of life described in the Epistle to the Hebrews of those who had 'not yet resisted unto blood,

striving against sin' (xii. 4), whose leaders seem to have already suffered (xiii. 7, 23). Except on some accidental occasion, such as the Neronian persecution, there is no reason to suppose that the power of Rome was systematically employed against the first disciples of the Apostles. But it does not diminish their sufferings, that they were the result of illegal violence, such as the tumults at Thessalonica, at Ephesus, or at Jerusalem.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 42–4.)

The First Day of the Week

The custom of meeting together, not on the Sabbath, but on the first day of the week, seems to have existed among Christians from the earliest times. Before the end of the second century simple forms of celebrating the Communion had become fixed among them. Even in the New Testament, though there is no trace of a regular hierarchy, or of a distinction between the clergy and laity, nor any mention of a form of worship, yet we may observe that the assembling of the disciples on Sunday is a custom already in use. On the first day of the week they came together and brake bread, and Paul preached to them; and he exhorts the Corinthian Christians to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem on the first day of the week. Thus probably older than the New Testament, older than the institution of Episcopacy or of any other form of Church government, is that custom of public worship on Sundays, which after the example of Christ and the Apostle St. Paul we still continue. For more than eighteen

hundred years there has never been a Sunday in which Christians have not met together; sometimes in days of persecution, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, at other times in gorgeous edifices reared by the munificence of princes, amid ceremonial pomp and splendour; in an upper room where two or three are gathered together, in the poor brick buildings of our Wesleyan or Dissenting brethren, in cathedrals like Cologne or Milan, filled from end to end with a sea of worshippers. There is no Christian structure now existing in the world which has lasted eighteen centuries, but the custom has survived them all, and certainly forms a truer link with primitive antiquity than any merely external memorial. (*College Sermons*, 279–80.)

V

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

Justification by Faith

THE justice of God may lead to our condemnation as well as to our justification. Are we then, in the language of the ancient tragedy, to say that no one can be counted happy before he dies, or that salvation is only granted when the end of our course is seen? Not so; the Gospel encourages us to regard ourselves as already saved; for we have communion with Christ and appropriate His work by faith. And this appropriation means nothing short of the renunciation of self and the taking up of the cross of Christ in daily life. Whether such an imitation or appropriation of Christ is illusive or real, a new mould of nature or only an outward and superficial impression, is a question not to be answered by any further theological distinction, but by an honest and good heart searching into itself. Then only, when we surrender ourselves into the hands of God, when we ask Him to show us to ourselves as we truly are, when we allow ourselves in no sin, when we attribute nothing to our own merits, when we test our faith, not by the sincerity of an hour, but of months and years, we learn the true meaning of that word in which, better

than any other, the nature of righteousness by faith is summed up—peace.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 271.)

Faith may be spoken of, in the language of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as the substance of things unseen. But what are the things unseen? Not only an invisible world ready to flash through the material at the appearance of Christ; not angels, or powers of darkness, or even God Himself 'sitting,' as the Old Testament described, 'on the circle of the heavens'; but the kingdom of truth and justice, the things that are within, of which God is the centre, and with which men everywhere by faith hold communion. Faith is the belief in the existence of this kingdom; that is, in the truth and justice and mercy of God, who disposes all things—not, perhaps, in our judgement for the greatest happiness of His creatures, but absolutely in accordance with our moral notions. And that this is not seen to be the case here, makes it a matter of faith that it will be so in some way that we do not at present comprehend. He that believes on God believes first, that He is; and, secondly, that He is the Rewarder of them that seek Him.

Now, if we go on to ask what gives this assurance of the truth and justice of God, the answer is, the life and death of Christ, who is the Son of God, and the Revelation of God. We know what He himself has told us of God, and we cannot conceive perfect goodness separate from perfect truth; nay, this goodness itself is the only conception we can form of God, if we confess what the mere immensity of the material world tends to suggest, that the

Almighty is not a natural or even a supernatural power, but a Being of whom the reason and conscience of man have a truer conception than imagination in its highest flights. He is not in the storm, nor in the thunder, nor in the earthquake, but 'in the still small voice.' And this image of God as He reveals himself in the heart of man is 'Christ in us the hope of glory'; Christ as He once was upon earth in His sufferings rather than His miracles—the image of goodness and truth and peace and love.

We are on the edge of a theological difficulty; for who can deny that the image of that goodness may fade from the mind's eye after so many centuries, or that there are those who recognize the idea and may be unable to admit the fact? Can we say that this error of the head is also a corruption of the will? The lives of such unbelievers in the facts of Christianity would sometimes refute our explanation. And yet it is true that Providence has made our spiritual life dependent on the belief in certain truths, and those truths run up into matters of fact, with the belief in which they have ever been associated; it is true, also, that the most important moral consequences flow from unbelief. We grant the difficulty: no complete answer can be given to it on this side the grave. Doubtless God has provided a way that the sceptic no less than the believer shall receive his due; He does not need our timid counsels for the protection of the truth. If among those who have rejected the facts of the Gospel history some have been rash, hypercritical, inflated with the pride of intellect, or secretly alienated by sensuality from the faith

of Christ—there have been others, also, upon whom we may conceive to rest a portion of that blessing which comes to such as 'have not seen and yet have believed.'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 268–9.)

Original Sin

The figure of the Apostle bears the impress of his own age and country; the interpretation of the figure is for every age, and for the whole world. A figure of speech it remains still, an allegory after the manner of that age and country, but yet with no uncertain or ambiguous signification. It means that 'God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth'; and that 'he hath concluded all under sin, that he may have mercy upon all.' It means a truth deep yet simple—the fact which we recognize in ourselves and trace everywhere around us—that we are one in a common evil nature, which, if it be not derived from the sin of Adam, exists as really as if it were. It means that we shall be made one in Christ, by the grace of God, in a measure here, more fully and perfectly in another world. It means that Christ is the natural head of the human race, the author of its spiritual life. It shows Him to us as He enters within the veil, in form as a man, the 'first fruits of them which sleep.' It is a sign or intimation which guides our thoughts in another direction also, beyond the world of which religion speaks, to observe what science tells us of the interdependence of soul and body—what history tells of the chain of lives and events. It leads us to reflect on

ourselves not as isolated, independent beings;—not such as we appear to be to our own narrow consciousness; but as we truly are—the creatures of antecedents which we can never know, fashioned by circumstances over which we have no control. The infant, coming into existence in a wonderful manner, inherits something, not from its parents only, but from the first beginning of the human race. He too is born into a family of which God in Christ is the Father. There is enough here to meditate upon—'a mystery since the world was'—without the 'weak and beggarly' elements of Rabbinical lore. We may not encumber St. Paul 'with the things which he destroyed.'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 315–6.)

Believing in the existence of God, and comparing our own happier lot with that of the poor and suffering whom we see around us, we cannot justify the ways of God to man without maintaining that there is more than appears; and for that reason, as well as for other reasons, we look forward to a future life. But, secondly, we feel that good is inseparable from evil, and that we can form no distinct conception of the one apart from the other. Both seem to flow equally from the free agency of man, and if we were to deny the existence of evil we should be compelled to deny the existence of good. This shows us that we must not be too certain of our own ideas on this subject, and that some part of the difficulty is due to the use of a word. For if, instead of speaking of the existence of evil in the world, we spoke rather of degrees of perfection or of degrees of imperfection (and what do we mean by evil more than this?), that

part of terror which is due to the influence of language would be removed. Logic would no longer be able to stand over us like a hard taskmaster asserting the omnipotence of God and the existence of evil, and requiring us to draw the conclusion.

But still, I admit that evil, under whatever name, is a reality which cannot be got rid of by any new use of language. And, though I am afraid of seeming to carry you too far away from home, there is another consideration to which I should wish to draw your attention. It is not the mere existence of evil, but the amount of evil in the world which really depresses us and seems like a load too heavy to be lifted up. And if we could realize to ourselves that the purposes of God are known to us in part only, not merely as regards another life, but also as regards this; if we could imagine that the evil and disorder which we see around us is but a step or stage in the progress towards order and perfection, then our conception of evil would be greatly changed. Geology tells us of remote ages in which animals wandered over the earth when as yet man 'was not,' and of ages longer and more distant still in which there was no breath or movement of living creature on land or sea. So slowly, and by so many steps, did the earth which we inhabit attain to the fullness of life which we see around us. And I might go on to speak of this world as a pebble in the ocean of space, as no more in relation to the universe than the least things are to the greatest, or to the whole earth. But, that we may not become dizzy in thinking about this, I will ask you to consider the bearing of such reflections, which are simple matters of fact, on our present subject. They tend to show us how small a part,

not only of the physical, but also of the moral world, is really known to us. They suggest to us that the evil and suffering which we see around us may be only the beginning of another and higher state of being, to be realized during countless ages in the history of man. That progress of which we think so much, from barbarism to civilization, or from ancient to modern times, may be as nothing compared with that which God has destined for the human race. And if we were living in those happier times, we should no more think seriously of the misery through which many have attained to that higher state of being than we should think of some bad dream, or dwell on some aberration or perversity of childhood when the character had been formed and had grown up to the stature of the perfect man.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 44–7.)

Atonement

At last the question has arisen within, as well as without, the Church of England: 'How the ideas of expiation, or satisfaction, or sacrifice, or imputation, are reconcilable with the moral and spiritual nature either of God or man?' Some there are who answer from analogy, and cite instances of vicarious suffering which appear in the disorder of the world around us. But analogy is a broken reed; of use, indeed, in pointing out the way where its intimations can be verified, but useless when applied to the unseen world in which the eye of observation no longer follows. Others affirm revelation or inspiration to be above criticism, and, in disregard alike of Church history and of Scripture, assume

their own view of the doctrine of the atonement to be a revealed or inspired truth. They do not see that they are cutting off the branch of the tree on which they are themselves sitting. For, if the doctrine of the atonement cannot be criticized, neither can it be determined what is the doctrine of the atonement; nor, on the same principles, can any true religion be distinguished from any false one, or any truth of religion from any error. It is suicidal in theology to refuse the appeal to a moral criterion. Others add a distinction of things above reason and things contrary to reason; a favourite theological weapon, which has, however, no edge or force, so long as it remains a generality. Others, in like manner, support their view of the doctrine of the atonement by a theory of accommodation, which also loses itself in ambiguity. For it is not determined whether, by accommodation to the human faculties, is meant the natural subjectiveness of knowledge, or some other limitation which applies to theology only. Others regard the death of Christ, not as an atonement or satisfaction to God, but as a manifestation of His righteousness, a theory which agrees with that of Grotius in its general character, when the latter is stripped of its technicalities. This theory is the shadow or surface of that of satisfaction; the human analogy equally fails; the punishment of the innocent for the guilty is not more unjust than the punishment of the innocent as an example to the guilty. Lastly, there are some who would read the doctrine of the atonement 'in the light of Divine love only'; the object of the sufferings and death of Christ being to draw men's hearts to God by the vision of redeeming love (com-

pare Abelard), and the sufferings themselves being the natural result of the passage of the Saviour through a world of sin and shame. Of these explanations the last seems to do the least violence to our moral feelings. Yet it would surely be better to renounce any attempt at inquiry into the objective relations of God and man, than to rest the greatest fact in the history of mankind on so slender a ground as the necessity for arousing the love of God in the human heart, in this and no other way.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 353–4.)

The silence of our Lord in the Gospels respecting any doctrine of atonement and sacrifice, the variety of expressions which occur in other parts of the New Testament, the fluctuation and uncertainty both of the Church and individuals on this subject in after-ages, incline us to agree with Gregory Nazianzen, that the death of Christ is one of those points of faith 'about which it is not dangerous to be mistaken.' And the sense of the imperfection of language and the illusions to which we are subject from the influence of past ideas, the consciousness that doctrinal perplexities arise chiefly from our transgression of the limits of actual knowledge, will lead us to desire a very simple statement of the work of Christ; a statement, however, in accordance with our moral ideas, and one which will not shift and alter with the metaphysical schools of the age; one, moreover, which runs no risk of being overthrown by an increasing study of the Old Testament or of ecclesiastical history. Endless theories there have been (of which the preceding sketch contains only a small portion), and many

more there will be as time goes on, like mystery plays, or sacred dramas (to adapt Lord Bacon's image), which have passed before the Church and the world. To add another would increase the confusion: it is ridiculous to think of settling a disputed point of theology unless by some new method. That other method can only be a method of agreement; little progress has been made hitherto by the method of difference. It is not reasonable, but extremely unreasonable, that the most sacred of all books should be the only one respecting the interpretation of which there is no certainty; that religion alone should be able to perpetuate the enmities of past ages; that the influence of words and names, which secular knowledge has long shaken off, should still intercept the natural love of Christians towards one another and their Lord. On our present subject there is no difficulty in finding a basis of reconciliation; the way opens when logical projections are removed, and we look at the truth in what may be rightly termed a more primitive and Apostolical manner. For all, or almost all, Christians would agree that in some sense or other we are reconciled to God through Christ; whether by the atonement and satisfaction which He made to God for us, or by His manifestation of the justice of God or love of God in the world, by the passive obedience of His death or the active obedience of His life, by the imputation of His righteousness to us or by our identity and communion with Him, or likeness to Him, or love of Him; in some one of these senses, which easily pass into each other, all would join in saying that 'He is the way, the truth, and the life.' And

had the human mind the same power of holding fast points of agreement as of discerning differences, there would be an end of the controversy.

The statements of Scripture respecting the work of Christ are very simple, and may be used without involving us in the determination of these differences. We can live and die in the language of St. Paul and St. John; there is nothing there repugnant to our moral sense. We have a yet higher authority in the words of Christ himself. Only in repeating and elucidating these statements, we must remember that Scripture phraseology is of two kinds, simple and figurative, and that the first is the interpretation of the second. We must not bring the New Testament into bondage to the Old, but ennoble and transfigure the Old by the New.

First; the death of Christ may be described as a sacrifice. But what sacrifice? Not 'the blood of bulls and of goats, nor the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,' but the living sacrifice 'to do Thy will, O God.' It is a sacrifice which is the negation of sacrifice; 'Christ the end of the law to them that believe.' Peradventure, in a heathen country, to put an end to the rite of sacrifice 'some one would even dare to die'; that expresses the relation in which the offering on Mount Calvary stands to the Levitical offerings. It is the death of what is outward and local, the life of what is inward and spiritual: 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men after me;' and 'Neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father.' It is the offering up of the old world on the cross; the law with its handwriting of ordinances, the former man with his affections and

lusts, the body of sin with its remembrances of past sin. It is the New Testament revealed in the blood of Christ, the Gospel of freedom, which draws men together in the communion of one spirit, as in St. Paul's time without respect of persons and nations, so in our own day without regard to the divisions of Christendom. In the place of Churches, priesthoods, ceremonials, systems, it puts a moral and spiritual principle which works with them, not necessarily in opposition to them, but beside or within them, to renew life in the individual soul.

Again, the death of Christ may be described as a ransom. It is not that God needs some payment which He must receive before He will set the captives free. The ransom is not a human ransom, any more than the sacrifice is a Levitical sacrifice. Rightly to comprehend the nature of this Divine ransom, we must begin with that question of the Apostle: 'Know ye not that whose servants ye yield yourselves to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' There are those who will reply: 'We were never in bondage at any time.' To whom Christ answers: 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;' and, 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' Ransom is 'deliverance to the captive.' There are mixed modes here also, as in the use of the term sacrifice—the word has a temporary allusive reference to a Mosaical figure of speech. That secondary allusive reference we are constrained to drop, because it is unessential; and also because it immediately involves further questions—a ransom to whom? for

what?—about which Scripture is silent, to which reason refuses to answer.

Thirdly, the death of Christ is spoken of as a death for us, or for our sins. The ambiguous use of the preposition 'for,' combined with the figure of sacrifice, has tended to introduce the idea of substitution; when the real meaning is not 'in our stead,' but only 'in behalf of,' or 'because of us.' It is a great assumption, or an unfair deduction, from such expressions, to say that Christ takes our place, or that the Father in looking at the sinner sees only Christ. Christ died for us in no other sense than He lived or rose again for us. Scripture affords no hint of His taking our place in His death in any other way than He did also in His life. He Himself speaks of His 'decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem,' quite simply: 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' The words of Caiaphas, 'It is expedient that one man should die for this nation,' and the comment of the Evangelist, 'and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad,' afford a measure of the meaning of such expressions. Here, too, there are mixed modes which seem to be inextricably blended in the language of Scripture, and which theology has not always distinguished. For the thing signified is, partly, that Christ died for our sakes, partly that He died by the hands of sinners, partly that He died with a perfect and Divine sympathy for human evil and suffering. But this ambiguity (which we may silently correct or explain) need not prevent our joining in words which, more

perhaps than any others, have been consecrated by religious use to express the love and affection of Christians towards their Lord.

Now suppose some one who is aware of the plastic and accommodating nature of language to observe, that in what has been written of late years on the doctrine of the atonement he has noticed an effort made to win for words new senses, and that some of the preceding remarks are liable to this charge; he may be answered, first, that those new senses are really a recovery of old ones (for the writers of the New Testament, though they use the language of the time, everywhere give it a moral meaning); and, secondly, that in addition to the modes of conception already mentioned, the Scripture has others which are not open to his objection. And those who, admitting the innocence and Scriptural character of the expressions already referred to, may yet fear their abuse, and therefore desire to have them excluded from articles of faith (just as many Protestants, though aware that the religious use of images is not idolatry, may not wish to see them in churches)—such persons may find a sufficient expression of the work of Christ in other modes of speech which the Apostle also uses. (1) Instead of the language of sacrifice, or ransom, or substitution, they may prefer that of communion or identity. (2) Or they may interpret the death of Christ by His life, and connect the bleeding form on Mount Calvary with the image of Him who went about doing good. Or (3) they may look inward at their own souls, and read there, inseparable from the sense of their own unworthiness, the assurance that God will not desert the work of

His hands, of which assurance the death of Christ is the outward witness to them. There are other ways, also, of conceiving the redemption of man which avoid controversy, any of which is a sufficient stay of the Christian life. For the kingdom of God is not this or that statement, or definition of opinion, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And the cross of Christ is to be taken up and borne; not to be turned into words, or made a theme of philosophical speculation.

1. Everywhere St. Paul speaks of the Christian as one with Christ. He is united with Him, not in His death only, but in all the stages of His existence; living with Him, suffering with Him, crucified with Him, buried with Him, rising again with Him, renewed in His image, glorified together with Him; these are the expressions by which this union is denoted. There is something meant by this language which goes beyond the experience of ordinary Christians, something, perhaps, more mystical than in these latter days of the world most persons seem to be capable of feeling, yet the main thing signified is the same for all ages, the knowledge and love of Christ, by which men pass out of themselves to make their will His and His theirs, the consciousness of Him in their thoughts and actions, communion with Him, and trust in Him. Of every act of kindness or good which they do to others His life is the type; of every act of devotion or self-denial His death is the type; of every act of faith His resurrection is the type. And often they walk with Him on earth, not in a figure only, and find Him near them, not in a figure only, in the valley of death. They experience

from Him the same kind of support as from the sympathy and communion of an earthly friend. That friend is also a Divine power. In proportion as they become like Him, they are reconciled to God through Him; they pass with Him into the relationship of sons of God. There is enough here for faith to think of, without sullying the mirror of God's justice, or overclouding His truth. We need not suppose that God ever sees us other than we really are, or attributes to us what we never did. Doctrinal statements, in which the nature of the work of Christ is most exactly defined, cannot really afford the same support as the simple conviction of His love.

Again (2), the import of the death of Christ may be interpreted by His life. No theological speculation can throw an equal light on it. From the other side we cannot see it, but only from this. Now the life of Christ is the life of One who knew no sin, on whom the shadow of evil never passed; who went about doing good; who had not where to lay His head; whose condition was in all respects the reverse of earthly and human greatness; who also had a sort of infinite sympathy or communion with all men everywhere; whom, nevertheless, His own nation betrayed to a shameful death. It is the life of One who came to bear witness of the truth, who knew what was in man, and never spared to rebuke him, yet condemned him not; Himself without sin, yet One to whom all men would soonest have gone to confess and receive forgiveness of sin. It is the life of One who was in constant communion with God as well as man; who was the inhabitant of another world while outwardly in this. It is

the life of One in whom we see balanced and united the separate gifts and graces of which we catch glimpses only in the lives of His followers. It is a life which is mysterious to us, which we forbear to praise, in the earthly sense, because it is above praise, being the most perfect image and embodiment that we can conceive of Divine goodness.

And the death of Christ is the fulfilment and consummation of His life, the greatest moral act ever done in this world, the highest manifestation of perfect love, the centre in which the rays of love converge and meet, the extremest abnegation or annihilation of self. It is the death of One who seals with His blood the witness of the truth which He came into the world to teach, which therefore confirms our faith in Him as well as animates our love. It is the death of One, who says at the last hour, 'Of them that Thou gavest Me, I have not lost one'—of One who, having come forth from God, and having finished the work which He came into the world to do, returns to God. It is a death in which all the separate gifts of heroes and martyrs are united in a Divine excellence—of One who most perfectly foresaw all things that were coming upon Him—who felt all, and shrank not—of One who, in the hour of death, set the example to His followers of praying for His enemies. It is a death which, more even than His life, is singular and mysterious, in which nevertheless we all are partakers—in which there was the thought and consciousness of mankind to the end of time, which has also the power of drawing to itself the thoughts of men to the end of time.

Lastly, there is a true Christian feeling in many

other ways of regarding the salvation of man, of which the heart is its own witness, which yet admit, still less than the preceding, of logical rule and precision. He who is conscious of his own infirmity and sinfulness, is ready to confess that he needs reconciliation with God. He has no proud thoughts: he knows that he is saved 'not of himself, it is the gift of God'; the better he is, the more he feels, in the language of Scripture, 'that he is an unprofitable servant.' Sometimes he imagines the Father 'coming out to meet him, when he is yet a long way off,' as in the parable of the Prodigal Son; at other times the burden of sin lies heavy on him; he seems to need more support—he can approach God only through Christ. All men are not the same; one has more of the strength of reason in his religion; another more of the tenderness of feeling. With some, faith partakes of the nature of a pure and spiritual morality; there are others who have gone through the struggle of St. Paul or Luther, and attain rest only in casting all on Christ. One will live after the pattern of the Sermon on the Mount, or the Epistle of St. James. Another finds a deep consolation and meaning in a closer union with Christ; he will 'put on Christ,' he will hide himself in Christ; he will experience in his own person the truth of those words of the Apostle, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' But if he have the spirit of moderation that there was in St. Paul, he will not stereotype these true, though often passing feelings, in any formula of substitution or satisfaction; still less will he draw out formulas of this sort into

remote consequences. Such logical idealism is of another age; it is neither faith nor philosophy in this. Least of all will he judge others by the circumstance of their admitting or refusing to admit the expression of his individual feelings as an eternal truth. He shrinks from asserting his own righteousness; he is equally unwilling to affirm that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is looking for forgiveness of sins, not because Christ has satisfied the wrath of God, but because God can show mercy without satisfaction: he may have no right to acquittal, he dare not say, God has no right to acquit. Yet again, he is very far from imagining that the most merciful God will indiscriminately forgive; or that the weakness of human emotions, groaning out at the last hour a few accustomed phrases, is a sufficient ground of confidence and hope. He knows that the only external evidence of forgiveness is the fact that he has ceased to do evil; no other is possible. Having Christ near as a friend and a brother, and making the Christian life his great aim, he is no longer under the dominion of a conventional theology. He will not be distracted by its phrases from communion with his fellow men. He can never fall into that confusion of head and heart, which elevates matters of opinion into practical principles. Difficulties and doubts diminish with him, as he himself grows more like Christ, not because he forcibly suppresses them, but because they become unimportant in comparison with purity, and holiness, and love. Enough of truth for him seems to radiate from the person of the Saviour. He thinks more and more of the human nature of Christ as the

expression of the Divine. He has found the way of life—that way is not an easy way—but neither is it beset by the imaginary perplexities with which a false use of the intellect in religion has often surrounded it.

It seems to be an opinion which is gaining ground among thoughtful and religious men, that in theology, the less we define the better. Definite statements respecting the relation of Christ either to God or man are only figures of speech; they do not really pierce the clouds which 'round our little life.' When we multiply words we do not multiply ideas; we are still within the circle of our own minds. No greater calamity has even befallen the Christian Church than the determination of some uncertain things which are beyond the sphere of human knowledge. A true instinct prevents our entangling the faith of Christ with the philosophy of the day; the philosophy of past ages is a still more imperfect exponent of it. Neither is it of any avail to assume revelation or inspiration as a sort of shield, or Catholicon, under which the weak points of theology may receive protection. For what is revealed or what inspired cannot be answered *a priori*; the meaning of the word Revelation must be determined by the fact, not the fact by the word.

If our Saviour were to come again to earth, which of all the theories of atonement and sacrifice would He sanction with His authority? Perhaps none of them, yet perhaps all may be consistent with a true service of Him. The question has no answer. But it suggests the thought that we shrink from bringing controversy into His presence. The same kind of lesson may be gathered from the con-

sideration of theological differences in the face of death. Who, as he draws near to Christ, will not feel himself drawn towards his theological opponents? At the end of life, when a man looks back calmly, he is most likely to find that he exaggerated in some things; that he mistook party spirit for a love of truth. Perhaps, he had not sufficient consideration for others, or stated the truth itself in a manner which was calculated to give offence. In the heat of the struggle, let us at least pause to imagine polemical disputes as they will appear a year, two years, three years hence; it may be, dead and gone—certainly more truly seen than in the hour of controversy. For the truths about which we are disputing cannot partake of the passing stir; they do not change even with the greater revolutions of human things. They are in eternity; and the image of them on earth is not the movement on the surface of the waters, but the depths of the silent sea. Lastly, as a measure of the value of such disputes, which above all other interests seem to have for a time the power of absorbing men's minds and rousing their passions, we may carry our thoughts onwards to the invisible world, and there behold, as in a glass, the great theological teachers of past ages, who have anathematized each other in their lives, resting together in the communion of the same Lord.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 359–69.)

Predestination and Free Will

In the Old Testament the only election of individuals is that of the great leaders or chiefs,

who are identified with the nation. But in the New Testament, where religion has become a personal and individual matter, it follows that election must also be of persons. The Jewish nation knew, or seemed to know, one fact, that they were the chosen people. They saw, also, eminent men raised up by the hand of God to be the deliverers of His servants. It is not in this 'historical' way that the Christian becomes conscious of his individual election. From within, not from without, he is made aware of the purpose of God respecting himself. Living in close and intimate union with God, having the mind of the Spirit and knowing the things of the Spirit, he begins to consider with St. Paul, 'When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, to reveal his Son in me.' His whole life seems a sort of miracle to him; supernatural, and beyond other men's in the gifts of grace which he has received. If he asks himself, 'Whence was this to me?' he finds no other answer but that God gave them 'because he had a favour unto him.' He recalls the hour of his conversion, when, in a moment, he was changed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Or, perhaps, the dealings of God with him have been insensible, yet not the less real; like a child, he cannot remember the time when he first began to trust the love of his parent. How can he separate himself from that love or refuse to believe that He who began the good work will also accomplish it unto the end? At which step in the ladder of God's mercy will he stop? 'Whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate; whom

He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified.'

A religious mind feels the difference between saying, 'God chose me; I cannot tell why; not for any good that I have done; and I am persuaded that He will keep me unto the end;' and saying, 'God chooses men quite irrespective of their actions, and predestines them to eternal salvation;' and yet more, if we add the other half of the doctrine, 'God refuses men quite irrespective of their actions, and they become reprobates, predestined to everlasting damnation.' Could we be willing to return to that stage of the doctrine which St. Paul taught, without comparing contradictory statements or drawing out logical conclusions—could we be content to rest our belief, as some of the greatest, even of Calvinistic divines have done, on fact and experience, theology would be no longer at variance with morality.

'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to do and to will of His good pleasure,' is the language of Scripture, adjusting the opposite aspects of this question. The Arminian would say, 'Work out your own salvation;' the Calvinist, 'God worketh in you both to do and to will of His good pleasure. However contradictory it may sound, the Scripture unites both; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 384–6.)

Attention has been lately called to the phenomena (already noticed) of the uniformity of human actions. The observation of this uniformity has caused a sort of momentary disturbance in the moral ideas of some persons, who seem unable to get rid of the illusion, that nature compels a certain number of individuals to act in a particular way, for the sake of keeping up the average. Their error is, that they confuse the law, which is only the expression of the fact, with the cause; it is as though they affirmed the universal to necessitate the particular. The same uniformity appears equally in matters of chance. Ten thousand throws of the dice, *ceteris paribus*, will give about the same number of twos, threes, sixes: what compulsion was there here? So ten thousand human lives will give a nearly equal number of forgeries, thefts, or other extraordinary actions. Neither is there compulsion here; it is the simple fact. It may be said, Why is the number uniform? In the first place, it is *not* uniform, that is to say, it is in our power to alter the proportions of crime by altering its circumstances. And this change of circumstances is not separable from the act of the legislator or private individual by which it may be accomplished, which is in turn suggested by other circumstances. The will or the intellect of man still holds its place as the centre of a moving world. But, secondly, the imaginary power of this uniform number affects no one in particular; it is not required that A, B, C should commit a crime, or transmit an undirected letter, to enable us to fill up a tabular statement. The fact exhibited in the tabular statement is the result of all the movements of all the wills of the

ten thousand persons who are made the subject of analysis.

It is possible to conceive great variations in such tables; it is possible, that is, to imagine, without any change of circumstances, a thousand persons executed in France during one year for political offences, and none the next. But the world in which this phenomenon was observed would be a very different sort of world from that in which we live. It would be a world in which 'nations, like individuals, went mad'; in which there was no habit, no custom; almost, we may say, no social or political life. Men must be no longer different, and so compensating one another by their excellencies and deficiencies, but all in the same extreme; as if the waves of the sea in a storm instead of returning to their level were to remain on high. The mere statement of such a speculation is enough to prove its absurdity. And, perhaps, no better way could be found of disabusing the mind of the objections which appear to be entertained to the fact of the uniformity of human actions, than a distinct effort to imagine the disorder of the world which would arise out of the opposite principle.

But the advocate of free will may again return to the charge, with an appeal to consciousness. 'Your freedom,' he will say, 'is but half freedom, but I have that within which assures me of an absolute freedom, without which I should be deprived of what I call responsibility.' No man has seen facts of consciousness, and therefore it is at any rate fair that before they are received they shall be subjected to analysis. We may look at an outward object which is called a table; no one would in this case

demand an examination into the human faculties before he admitted the existence of the table. But inward facts are of another sort; that they really exist, may admit of doubt; that they exist in the particular form attributed to them, or in any particular form, is a matter very difficult to prove. Nothing is easier than to insinuate a mere opinion, under the disguise of a fact of consciousness.

Consciousness tells, or seems to tell, of an absolute freedom; and this is supposed to be a sufficient witness of the existence of such a freedom. But does consciousness tell also of the conditions under which this freedom can be exercised? Does it remind us that we are finite beings? Does it present to one his bodily, to another his mental constitution? Is it identical with self-knowledge? No one imagines this. To what, then, is it the witness? To a dim and unreal notion of freedom, which is as different from the actual fact as dreaming is from acting. No doubt the human mind has or seems to have a boundless power, as of thinking so also of willing. But this imaginary power, going as it does far beyond experience, varying too in youth and age, greatest often in idea when it is really least, cannot be adduced as a witness for what is inconsistent with experience.

The question, How is it possible for us to be finite beings, and yet to possess this consciousness of freedom which has no limit? may be partly answered by another question: How is it possible for us to acquire any ideas which transcend experience? The answer is, only, that the mind has the power of forming such ideas; it can conceive a beauty, goodness, truth, which has no existence

on earth. The conception, however, is subject to this law, that the greater the idealization the less the individuality. In like manner that imperfect freedom which we enjoy as finite beings is magnified by us into an absolute idea of freedom, which seems to be infinite because it drops out of sight the limits with which nature in fact everywhere surrounds us; and also because it is the abstraction of self, of which we can never be deprived, and which we conceive to be acting still when all the conditions of action are removed.

Freedom is absolute in another sense, as the correlative of obligation. Men entertain some one, some another, idea of right, but all are bound to act according to that idea. The standard may be relative to their own circumstances, but the duty is absolute; and the power is also absolute of refusing the evil and choosing the good, under any possible contingency. It is a matter (not only of consciousness but) of fact, that we have such a power, quite as much as the facts of statistics, to which it is sometimes opposed, or rather, to speak more correctly, is one of them. And when we make abstraction of this power, that is, when we think of it by itself, there arises also the conception of an absolute freedom.

So singularly is human nature constituted, looking from without on the actions of men as they are, witnessing inwardly to a higher law. 'You ought to do so; you have the power to do so,' is consistent with the fact, that in practice you fail to do so. It may be possible for us to unite both these aspects of human nature, yet experience seems to show that we commonly look first at one and then

at the other. The inward vision tells us the law of duty and the will of God; the outward contemplation of ourselves and others shows the trials to which we are most subject. Any transposition of these two points of view is fatal to morality. For the proud man to say, 'I inherited pride from my ancestors;' or for the licentious man to say, 'It is in the blood;' for the weak man to say, 'I am weak, and will not strive;' for any to find the excuses of their vices in their physical temperament or external circumstances, is the corruption of their nature.

Yet this external aspect of human affairs has a moral use. It is a duty to look at the consequences of actions, as well as at actions themselves; the knowledge of our own temperament, or strength, or health, is a part also of the knowledge of self. We have need of the wise man's warning, about 'age which will not be defied' in our moral any more than in our physical constitution. In youth, also, there are many things outward and indifferent, which cannot but exercise a moral influence on after-life. Often opportunities of virtue have to be made, as well as virtuous efforts; there are forms of evil, too, against which we struggle in vain by mere exertions of the will. He who trusts only to a moral or religious impulse, is apt to have aspirations, which never realize themselves in action. His moral nature may be compared to a spirit without a body, fluttering about in the world, but unable to comprehend or grasp any good.

Yet more, in dealing with classes of men, we seem to find that we have greater power to shape their circumstances than immediately to affect their

wills. The voice of the preacher passes into the air; the members of his congregation are like persons 'beholding their natural face in a glass'; they go their way, forgetting their own likeness. And often the result of a long life of ministerial work has been the conversion of two or three individuals. The power which is exerted in such a case may be compared to the unaided use of the hand, while mechanical appliances are neglected. Or to turn to another field of labour, in which the direct influence of Christianity has been hitherto small, may not the reason why the result of missions is often disappointing be found in the circumstance, that we have done little to improve the political or industrial state of those among whom our missionaries are sent? We have thought of the souls of men, and of the Spirit of God influencing them, in too naked a way; instead of attending to the complexity of human nature, and the manner in which God has ever revealed himself in the history of mankind.

The great lesson, which Christians have to learn in the present day, is to know the world as it is; that is to say, to know themselves as they are; human life as it is; nature as it is; history as it is. Such knowledge is also a power, to fulfil the will of God and to contribute to the happiness of man. It is a resting-place in speculation, and a new beginning in practice. Such knowledge is the true reconcilement of the opposition of necessity and free will. Not that spurious reconcilement which places necessity in one sphere of thought, freedom in another; nor that pride of freedom which is ready to take up arms against plain facts; nor yet that demonstration of necessity in which logic, equally careless of facts,

has bound fast the intellect of man. The whole question, when freed from the illusions of language, is resolvable into experience. Imagination cannot conquer for us more than that degree of freedom which we truly have; the tyranny of science cannot impose upon us any law or limit to which we are not really subject; theology cannot alter the real relations of God and man. The facts of human nature and of Christianity remain the same, whether we describe them by the word 'necessity' or 'freedom,' in the phraseology of Lord Bacon and Locke, or in that of Calvin and Augustine.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 404–9.)

We hear a great deal of the doctrine of heredity nowadays, and there is value in such observations, if they teach us the direction in which the greatest resistance has to be made. We do not wish to ignore the inherited evil tendencies of men, but effectually to combat them, and therefore we must arouse in our minds the consciousness of freedom; not that blind freedom which supposes that in a moment of time any change may be made in our mental and moral constitution (which is as absurd as to suppose that by a sudden effort a man can fly in the air, or by the lifting up of his arm stop some mechanical power), but that intelligent freedom which knows how great an effect may be produced by the continuous exertion of a very small force during many years, whether on the mind or the body. About the works of the machine we know far more than formerly, but this knowledge will be worse than useless if it paralyses the will.

(*College Sermons*, 239.)

The Divine Attributes

If we attribute to God perfect justice, we cannot say He will pass over our offences without punishment; or that, having regard to the frailty of His creatures, He views with equal favour the righteous and the wicked. But we can say that nothing accidental, nothing capricious, enters into His government; He will not inflict disproportionate punishment, He will not lay down arbitrary conditions which He insists on our fulfilling; He will not fix a time before which all may be retrieved, after which all is for ever lost. We are right in assuming this about God, because we should infer it about any just or good man. To suppose anything else would be to suppose that the justice of God falls short even of a moderate degree of human justice. There is a great deal of comfort, not without awe, in all this. And we may go a step further. For the justice of God is based upon perfect knowledge. He sees not only all the evil but all the good which is in us, the unexpressed wish to become better, the least sense of sorrow for the past; and often He does not judge us as man judges us.

So again of His love and truth. The Scripture tells us that God is love, and that He wills all men to be saved. Or, again, 'He concluded all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all.' There is no qualification of this; no exception to it. Can it be limited to those who have heard the message of Christ and been saved by believing on Him? The idea of Divine love carries us far beyond this, to think of a love of God which is inexhaustible,

not confined to the good only, but extended to all, and not resting satisfied while even a single individual among His creatures remains estranged from Him. There may be ways by which He has provided that 'His banished ones be not expelled from Him.' We shall do well to think of the state of being in which we are here, of that in which we shall be hereafter, as a state of education in which He is drawing us nearer to Himself and to the truth. Of such things we may meditate, although we cannot describe or define them. They are hidden from our eyes, like that time of which the Apostle speaks in the words of the text, 'When the Son Himself shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' But although we are unable to tell in what manner the work of love can be accomplished, any more than we can tell how the dead are raised up, we do not therefore cease to acknowledge, in the fullness of its consequences, the first and greatest of all articles of belief, that God is Love.

Once more, if God is truth, what is the inference? It is not a particular truth, but all truth, which we must identify with Him; the truths of science as well as the truths of religion or morals; the temper of truth everywhere, even when seemingly antagonistic to Christianity. Is not this again an enlargement of our idea of God? To the student, especially in these days, the thought that any inquiry honestly pursued cannot be displeasing to the God of truth is a great source of peace and comfort. He is better able to meet the attacks of his fellow men when he is stayed upon the God of truth, and he feels that his duty towards knowledge is also

a duty towards God. He is conscious that his life is innocent, though many may condemn him. And sometimes he will seem to see the God of truth looking down upon the violence and party spirit of the world and of the Church.

These three—justice, love, truth—are the three great attributes of the Divine nature, aspects of the one perfection which God is. When they meet in our hearts God may be said to take up His abode within us.

Let us take away with us the thought of a great writer—'Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 109–12.)

It is a maxim of human law that the most effectual punishment is that which is most duly proportioned to the crime. This is illustrated by the difficulty of obtaining a conviction or executing a penalty when the punishment is too great for the offence. Human nature revolts at it. Neither is the Divine penalty really more terrible because supposed to be infinite. For this is only vague and unreal, a penalty which no one applies to himself, and to which the heart and conscience bear no witness. But still there is a comfort in feeling that we are in the hands of God; we do not seek to avoid just punishment, and He will not suffer us to be punished above what we deserve. For 'shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' will His judgement fall short of the simple rules of human justice? Nay, surely, He will not fall short of this: He will exceed it. Neither will His justice depend

upon accidents; neither will He 'take me at a catch,' as has been roughly but truly said; nor will He divide men into two classes only where there are many classes, or rather infinite degrees of them. Nor will He judge them by any narrow or technical rules, but by the broad principles of right and wrong. Slowly in the course of ages mankind have shaken off superstitions about God, and learned the simple truth that God is just, which seems to be the beginning of religion, and yet is hardly understood even now in all its fullness. There is probably no one in this church, father, mother, or any one else, who could for a moment tolerate the idea that an unbaptized infant would suffer everlasting torments. Remember that this was once the faith of nearly the whole Christian world, and ask yourself whether, in these latter days, which are sometimes supposed to be rife with unbelief, Christians have not made some progress towards a truer conception of the ways of God to man.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 169–71.)

There is one word hardly translatable into other languages, because the Israelitish prophets have themselves infused into it a depth of meaning, under which all the attributes of God are comprehended. This is 'holiness'; and God is called by them 'the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy.' It is difficult for us to comprehend the whole signification of this word. It means moral goodness, it means righteousness, it means truth, it means purity—but it means more than these. It means the spirit which is altogether above the world, and yet has an affinity with good-

ness and truth in the world. It implies separation as well as elevation, dignity as well as innocence. It is the personification of the idea of good. It is the light of which the whole earth is full, which is also the fire which burns up the ungodly. It has a side of awe as well as of goodness. It suggests the thought, not of direct punishment or suffering to be inflicted on the wicked, but rather, 'How can we sinners venture into the presence of a holy God? What unclean person can behold His face and live?' Like other ideas of perfection, it may be called, in the language of philosophy, transcendental, that is to say, not wholly capable of being expressed in human language. After we have combined all the aspects of truth or goodness in one, there remains something more which is above us, which we can feel rather than describe.

But what is necessarily indistinct to us when we endeavour to carry our thoughts beyond this world becomes clearer to us when we return to earth and think, not of God, but of man. The holiness of God is that image of Himself which He seeks to implant in all His creatures. 'Be ye holy even as I am holy,' are words in which the whole of religion may be summed up. And though we are not able to look at the sun in his strength, we may yet see him through a glass darkly or in human reflections of him. Thus, for example, if we were to attempt to define or describe the meaning of the term once more with reference to man, we should find that there were very few to whom we could venture to apply it. It means, in the first place, perfect disinterestedness, indifference to earthly and human interests. Again, it implies a mind one

with God, over which no shadow of uncleanness or untruth ever passes, which seeks only to know His will, and knowing it, to carry it out in the world. To purity and truth it adds peace and a certain dignity derived from independence of all things. It is heaven upon earth—to live loving all men, disturbed by nothing, fearing nothing. It is a temper of mind which is unshaken by changes of religious opinion, which is not dependent upon outward observances of religion. Such a character we may meet with once or twice in a long life, and derive a sort of inspiration from it. And oh! that it were possible that some of us might, even in the days of our youth, find the blessedness of leading such a life in the light of God's presence always.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 71–3.)

Prayer

Prayer is the summing up of the Christian life in a definite act, which is at once inward and outward, the power of which on the character, like that of any other act, is proportioned to its intensity. The imagination of doing rightly adds little to our strength; even the wish to do so is not necessarily accompanied by a change of heart and conduct. But in prayer we imagine, and wish, and perform all in one. Our imperfect resolutions are offered up to God; our weakness becomes strength, our words deeds. No other action is so mysterious; there is none in which we seem, in the same manner, to renounce ourselves that we may be one with God.

Of what nature that prayer is which is effectual

to the obtaining of its requests is a question of the same kind as what constitutes a true faith. That prayer, we should reply, which is itself most of an act, which is most immediately followed by action, which is most truthful, manly, self-controlled, which seems to lead and direct, rather than to follow, our natural emotions. That prayer which is its own answer because it asks not for any temporal good, but for union with God. That prayer which begins with the confession, 'We know not what to pray for as we ought;' which can never by any possibility interfere with the laws of nature, because even in extremity of danger or suffering, it seeks only the fulfilment of His will. That prayer which acknowledges that our enemies, or those of a different faith, are equally with ourselves in the hands of God; in which we never unwittingly ask for our own good at the expense of others. That prayer in which faith is strong enough to submit to experience; in which the soul of man is nevertheless conscious not of any self-produced impression, but of a true communion with the Author and Maker of his being.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 129–30.)

The beginning of true prayer is resignation to the Divine will. We must not try to make His will our will, but to make our will His will. We must not kick against the pricks, or beg that this sickness or pain, the loss of this beloved one, may be averted from us. For God has taught us by many signs and proofs that these things are regulated by fixed laws. And is there not a kind of impiety in refusing to learn the plainest of lessons? Now that the book

of nature has been revealed to us, must we not have the courage to say, a little parodying the words of the prophet, 'Henceforth there shall be no more this prayer in the Christian Church, "Father, alter Thy laws for our good"; but "Father, if it be possible . . . nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done"'? We wish to live, perhaps, and accomplish a little more before we go home; but we know very well that our prayers will not delay the coming on of age, or restore the failing sight, or revive the strength of the paralysed. 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' And in youth there are often troubles which happen to us, great in themselves, and rendered greater by imagination, such as loss of fortune, or inferiority of position, or disappointment of the affections, or some other kind of disappointment; and we think with bitterness, 'Oh, that we could have this particular trial spared to us; that we could have had the position of which we could have made such a good use; the friend without whom life seems hardly worth having!' But all this is weakness and discontent. Can we not rise out of these crises of our lives, acquiescing in the will of God, but starting afresh to do Him service, making stepping-stones of our former selves towards something higher, setting our hearts where true joys are to be found? We cannot go to God and say, 'O God, give me the life of that child, or sister, or wife, who is visibly hastening to the end.' But we can say, 'Though He smite me, yet will I trust in Him;' 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Neither can we go to Him and say, 'O Lord, give me wealth,' or even, 'give me a sufficiency of the

means of life, that I may make a good use of them.' But we can go to Him and say, 'O Lord, we thank Thee for the blessings which Thou hast given us, and for the sorrows by which Thou hast chastened us. Grant that we may draw nearer to Thee, and do Thy will more perfectly.' What is this but praying that we may be more holy, more pure, more just, more truthful, more willing to live for others? Can we offer up such prayers too often, or have too many of them?

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 254–6.)

Regarding prayer not so much as consisting of particular acts of devotion, but as the spirit of life, it seems to be the spirit of harmony with the will of God. It is the aspiration after all good, the wish, stronger than any earthly passion or desire, to live in His service only. It is the temper of mind which says in the evening, 'Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit;' which rises up in the morning, 'To do Thy will, O God;' and which all the day regards the actions of business and of daily life as done unto the Lord and not to men—'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' The trivial employments, the meanest or lowest occupations, may receive a kind of dignity when thus converted into the service of God. Other men live for the most part in dependence on the opinion of their fellow men; they are the creatures of their own interests, they hardly see anything clearly in the mists of their own self-deceptions. But he whose mind is resting in God rises above the petty aims and interests of men; he desires only to fulfil the Divine

will, he wishes only to know the truth. His eye is single, in the language of Scripture, and his whole body is full of light. The light of truth and disinterestedness flows into his soul; the presence of God, like the sun in the heavens, warms his heart. Such a one, whom I have imperfectly described, may be no mystic; he may be one among us whom we know not, undistinguished by any outward mark from his fellow men, yet carrying within him a hidden source of truth and strength and peace.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 274–5.)

There is yet another aspect in which prayer may be regarded, as the language which the soul uses to God—the mode of expression in which she pours out her thoughts to Him, just as ordinary language is the expression of our ordinary thoughts and gives clearness and distinctness to them. Let not our words be many, but simple and few; not using vain repetitions or indulging in vague emotions; not allowing ourselves in fantastic practices; but self-collected, firm, clear; not deeming that mere self-abasement can give any pleasure to God any more than to an earthly monarch. And above all let us be truthful, seeking to view ourselves and our lives as in His presence, neither better than we are nor worse than we are, making our prayers the first motive and spring of all our actions; and sometimes passing before God in our mind's eye all those with whom we are in any way connected, that we may be better able to do our duty towards them, and more ready to think of them all in their several ranks and stations as the creatures of God equally with ourselves, each one having a life and being and

affections as valuable to himself and to God as our own. Neither should we forget sometimes to pray that God may clear away from our souls all error and prejudice—'The mind through all its powers Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mists from thence Purge and disperse'; and that, as years go on and our faculties in the course of nature become weaker and narrower, and our limbs are old and our blood runs cold, instead of creeping into ourselves we may still be expanding like the flower before the sun in the Divine presence, and cheered by the warmth of the Divine love.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 278–9.)

Immortality

The belief in a future life is not derived from revelation, though greatly strengthened by it. It is the growing sense of human nature respecting itself. Scarcely any one passes out of existence fearing that he will cease to be; perhaps no one whose mind may be regarded as in a natural state. Absurd superstitions, even the painful efforts to get rid of self, in some of the Eastern religions, indirectly bear witness to the same truth. They seem to say, 'Stamp upon the Soul, crush it as you will, the poor worm will still creep out into the sunshine of the Almighty.' Nor is the consciousness of another life a mere instinct which, however distorted, still remains: to those who reason it is inseparably connected with our highest, that is, with our moral notions. We feel that God cannot have given us capacities and affections, that they should find no other fulfilment than they attain here; that He cannot intend the unequal measure of good and evil

which He has assigned to men on earth to be the end of all: nor can we believe that the crimes or sins which go unpunished in this world are to pass away as though they had never been; that the cries of saints and heroes, and the work of the Saviour Himself, have gone up unheard before His throne. That can never be. Equally impossible is it to suppose that creatures whom He has endowed with reason are, like the great multitude of the human race, to be sunk for ever in hopeless ignorance and unconsciousness. It is true that the nature of the change which is to come over them and us is not disclosed: 'The times and the seasons the Father has put in His own power.' Had it been otherwise, immortality must have overpowered us; the thought of another state would have swallowed up this.

And this sense of a future life and judgement to come has been so quickened in us by Christianity, that it may be said almost to have been created by it. It is the witness of Christ Himself, than which to the Christian no assurance can be greater. He who meditates on this Divine life in the brief narrative which has been preserved of it, will find the belief in another world come again to him when many physical and metaphysical proofs are beginning to be as broken reeds. He will find more than enough to balance the difficulties of the manner 'how' or the time 'when'; he will find, as he draws nearer to Christ, a sort of impossibility of believing otherwise. When we ask, 'How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?' St. Paul answers, 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die;' when we raise objections to the narrative which has been pre-

served of our Saviour's discourse respecting the last things and the end of the world, may not the answer to this as well as to many other difficulties be gathered from His own words—'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are Spirit, and they are truth'?

There was a sense in which our Saviour said that it was better for His disciples that He should be taken from them, that the Comforter should come unto them. There is also a blessing recorded in the Gospels on those who had not seen and yet had believed. Is there not a sense in which it is more blessed to live at a distance from those events which are the beginning of Christianity, than under their immediate influence, to see them as they truly are in the light of this world as well as of another? If it was an illusion in the first Christians to believe in the immediate coming of Christ, is it not a cause of thankfulness that now we see clearly? Of truth, as well as of love, it may be said there is no fear in truth, but perfect truth casteth out fear. The eye which is strong enough to pierce through the shadow of death is not troubled because the golden mist is dispelled and it looks on the open heaven.

And though prophecy may fail and tongues cease, though to those who look back upon them when they are with the past, they are different from what they were to those who melted under their influence, the pure moral and spiritual nature of Christianity, the 'kingdom of God within,' remains as at the first, the law of Christian love becoming more and more, and all in all.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 64–6.)

VI

RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES

The Simple Truths of Religion

* These simple truths of religion are the natural bulwarks against doubt, and they are the natural boundaries of our knowledge of things beyond us. We cannot pierce the veil which separates us from the world of spirits, but the belief in love, in truth, in justice, in holiness, may sustain us in the valley of the shadow of death. These are the powers which encircle us, not the darkness of the unknown, as some philosophers tell us. Nor can any one pretend that because this is an age of criticism and unbelief he has lost the rule of life—he never had one who imagines this. We may sum up all in the precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself;' he may pass his life in imitation of Him who 'went about doing good.' There is nothing simpler in this world than the Gospel of Christ. No clear-headed man can for a moment imagine that doubts about the inspiration of Scripture, or the authority of the Church, or the sweet influences of art, or the opinion of physical necessity, can in any degree relax the requirements of morality or duty. There are many

movements going on in the world in which some of us take an extraordinary interest. But we also know that there are still higher truths which are eternal and do not partake of this earthly tide and motion.

* The consideration of these simple truths, or Divine ideas, seems to afford the natural balance to the things of sense. Experience has a very great hold upon us; we can hardly believe what we do not see. Facts are fixed points to which we turn the more readily at times when we are weary of the changes of opinion. Yet the mere observation of a particular class of facts will not give us understanding of another class or enable us to take a comprehensive view of the world or of human life. The ideas of which I am speaking are not of the nature of facts, but neither are they opinions. For we are no more uncertain that we ought to make them the rule of our lives, than we are of the law by which the stone falls to the ground or the light body rises upwards. (*Unpublished.*)

The Government of God and the Laws of Nature

* The love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts has to be reconciled with the fixed law which is never interrupted for our sake. The personal government of God must be harmonized with the ordinary course of nature. Is the act of prayer a mere impression which we are seeking to produce on our own minds? or is there a real strength communicated by it as truly as if a voice from

heaven replied to our words? And may not these two lines of thought, the thought of the child and the thought of the philosopher, receive a practical reconciliation? (*Unpublished.*)

The Opposition of Reason and Faith

The generation to which we belong has difficulties to contend with, perhaps greater than those of any former age; and certainly different from them. Some of those difficulties arise out of the opposition of reason and faith; the critical inquiries of which the Old and New Testament have been the subject, are a trouble to many; the circumstance that, while the Bible is the word of life for all men, such inquiries are open only to the few, increases the irritation. The habit of mind which has been formed in the study of Greek or Roman history may be warned off the sacred territory, but cannot really be prevented from trespassing; still more impossible is it to keep the level of knowledge at one point in Germany, at another in England. Geology, ethnology, historical and metaphysical criticism, assail in succession not the Scriptures themselves, but notions and beliefs which in the minds of many good men are bound up with them. The eternal strain to keep theology where it is while the world is going on, specious reconcilements, political or ecclesiastical exigencies, recent attempts to revive the past, and the reaction to which they have given birth, the contrast that everywhere arises of old and new, all add to the confusion. Probably no other age has been to the same extent the subject of cross and contradictory influences. What can

be more unlike than the tone of sermons and of newspapers? or the ideas of men on art, politics, and religion, now, and half a generation ago? The thoughts of a few original minds, like wedges, pierce into all received and conventional opinions and are almost equally removed from either. The destruction of 'shams,' that is, the realization of things as they are amid all the conventions of thought and speech and action, is also an element of unsettlement. The excess of self-reflection, again, is not favourable to strength or simplicity of character. Every one seems to be employed in decomposing the world, human nature, and himself. The discovery is made that good and evil are mixed in a far more subtle way than at first sight would have appeared possible; and that even extremes of both meet in the same person. The mere analysis of moral and religious truth, the fact that we know the origin of many things which the last generation received on authority, is held by some to destroy their sacredness. Lastly, there are those who feel that all the doubts of sceptics put together fall short of that great doubt which has insinuated itself into their minds, from the contemplation of mankind—saying one thing and doing another.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 298–300.)

The Evils of Society

Suppose a person acquainted with the real state of the world in which we live and move, and neither morosely depreciating nor unduly exalting human nature, to turn to the image of the Christian Church in the New Testament, how great would the differ-

ence appear! How would the blessing of poverty contrast with the real, even the moral advantages of wealth! the family of love, with distinctions of ranks! the spiritual, almost supernatural, society of the first Christians, with our world of fashion, of business, of pleasure! the community of goods, with our meagre charity to others! the prohibition of going to law before the heathen, with our endless litigation before judges of all religions! the cross of Christ, with our ordinary life! How little does the world in which we live seem to be designed for the tabernacle of immortal souls! How large a portion of mankind, even in a civilized country, appears to be sacrificed to the rest, and to be without the means of moral and religious improvement! How fixed, and steadfast, and regular do dealings of money and business appear! how transient and passing are religious objects! Then, again, consider how society, sometimes in self-defence, sets a false stamp on good and evil; as in the excessive punishment of the errors of women, compared with Christ's conduct to the woman who was a sinner. Or when men are acknowledged to be in the sight of God equal, how strange it seems that one should heap up money for another, and be dependent on him for his daily life. Susceptible minds, attaching themselves some to one point some to another, may carry such reflections very far, until society itself appears evil, and they desire some primitive patriarchal mode of life. They are tired of conventionalities; they want, as they say, to make the Gospel a reality; to place all men on a religious, social, and political equality. In this, as in the last case, 'they are kicking against the pricks;' what they want is

a society which has not the very elements of a social state; they do not perceive that the cause of the evil is human nature itself, which will not cohere without mixed motives and received forms and distinctions, and that Providence has been pleased to rest the world on a firmer basis than is supplied by the fleeting emotions of philanthropy, viz. self-interest. We are not, indeed, to sit with our arms folded, and acquiesce in human evil. But we must separate the accidents from the essence of this evil: questions of taste, things indifferent, or customary, or necessary, from the weightier matters of oppression, falsehood, vice. The ills of society are to be struggled against in such a manner as not to violate the conditions of society; the precepts of Scripture are to be applied, but not without distinctions of times and countries; Christian duties are to be enforced, but not identified with political principles. To see the world—not as it ought to be, but as it is—to be on a level with the circumstances in which God has placed them, to renounce the remote and impossible for what is possible and in their reach; above all, to begin within—these are the limits which enthusiasts should set to their aspirations after social good. It is a weary thing to be all our life long warring against the elements, or, like the slaves of some eastern lord, using our hands in a work which can only be accomplished by levers and machines. The physician of society should aid nature instead of fighting against it; he must let the world alone as much as he can; to a certain degree, he will even accept things as they are in the hope of bettering them.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 294–6.)

The Church and the World

The God of peace rest upon you, is the concluding benediction of most of the Epistles. How can He rest upon us, who draw so many hard lines of demarcation between ourselves and other men; who oppose the Church and the world, Sundays and working days, revelation and science, the past and present, the life and state of which religion speaks and the life which we ordinarily lead? It is well that we should consider these lines of demarcation rather as representing aspects of our life than as corresponding to classes of mankind. It is well that we should acknowledge that one aspect of life or knowledge is as true as the other. Science and revelation touch one another: the past floats down in the present. We are all members of the same Christian world; we are all members of the same Christian Church. Who can bear to doubt this of themselves or of their family? What parent would think otherwise of his child?—what child of his parent? Religion holds before us an ideal which we are far from reaching; natural affection softens and relieves the characters of those we love; experience alone shows men what they truly are. All these three must so meet as to do violence to none. If, in the age of the Apostles, it seemed to be the duty of the believers to separate themselves from the world and take up a hostile position, not less marked in the present age is the duty of abolishing in a Christian country what has now become an artificial distinction, and seeking by every means in our power, by fairness, by truthfulness, by knowledge, by love unfeigned, by the absence of party

and prejudice, by acknowledging the good in all things, to reconcile the Church to the world, the one half of our nature to the other; drawing the mind off from speculative difficulties, or matters of party and opinion, to that which almost all equally acknowledge and almost equally rest short of—the life of Christ.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 246.)

The Divine Nature

The figures of the Prophets and of the Book of Revelation, which describe the unseen world as a place above or below us which God and His angels make their habitation, or the powers of evil their stronghold, seem to fade away before the facts of natural science. Then, again, the littleness of this earth, which we once supposed to be the centre of all things, hardly more in the ocean of space than a point or a drop of water, is a very overwhelming thought. Whatever people may say to those who reflect on these things, there is greater difficulty in realizing the unseen than formerly. However we describe or conceive God, whether as the mind of the world, or as the law of the world, or as the Father of the world, we are led more and more to feel that His nature is inscrutable to us, and can be no more expressed in words or figures of speech than in the graven images of the olden time. Again, as the notion of a perfect God becomes more present to us, so also the contradictions which the appearances of the world offer to this perfection strike forcibly upon the mind. Mankind place things side by side now which formerly were not seen to be inconsistent; objections which used to sleep quietly

enough now demand a well-considered answer. One perhaps asks to have the law of cause and effect reconciled with the responsibility of man; another repeats the favourite theological paradox, 'Why, if God is all-powerful and all-wise, does He permit the existence of evil?' I can very well imagine that the theory of the struggle for existence, of which we have heard so much during the last fifteen years, may produce a very painful impression on the minds of unthinking persons, because appearing to them so contradictory to the love of God towards all His creatures, 'There is not a sparrow that falls to the ground without your Father.' The facts or speculations respecting the origin of society, or even of the family, so unlike that Garden of Eden of which our fathers dreamed, are very likely to have a similar effect. These inquiries I mention, not to refute them (they are not to be refuted by the way or in a moment), but simply with one object—to show that religious belief is not so easy a matter as it once was, and that this generation is not to be accused of greater irreligion than their predecessors because they are unable at once to adjust all these marvellous discoveries and novel inquiries in their true relation to their own traditional belief, or even to see how they can be reconciled with very simple truths of religion and morality. That is the task which God has assigned to us, and not to us only, but to every succeeding generation of Christians, to entwine the old with the new, to heal that great breach which seems to have arisen between religion and knowledge, and to some extent between religion and morality.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 102–4.)

Religion and Politics

The attempt to form moral judgements on politics is a temptation which naturally besets us, for if we can raise political questions into moral ones we effectually place ourselves in the right and our opponents in the wrong. We elevate ourselves on a sort of moral platform; we appeal to the heart against the head, to the feelings against the reason. We trust to the force of general principles weighed in the balance with doubtful or disputed facts. These are arts which most men unconsciously practise in times of political excitement, and a generous person who has any insight into human nature is apt to revolt from them, because he knows that religion and morality are the disguises of party spirit. I will add one more illustration of the wrong way in which religion may be introduced into politics. I am old enough to remember the time when a respectable section of the community believed that the judgements of God were about to fall upon this country. And for what? For our neglect of education? for the sufferings of the poor? for our toleration of slavery (now happily abolished)? for the severity of our criminal code? For none of these things, but because we had admitted our Roman Catholic brethren to Parliament, or, about twelve years later, because we had given a grant for the education of poor Roman Catholic priests! It was argued that if a nation, like an individual, had a conscience, it must, like an individual, have one conscience; and upon this fallacy of composition or division, as logicians would term it, and under the still greater fallacy that in gratifying their own party feelings

they were doing God service, the peace of nations was imperilled, the risk of civil wars was incurred. For, if such a doctrine could be maintained, there would seem to be no stopping until the members of all religions but the dominant and established one were excluded from civil and political rights. We must wade through oceans of blood to an unmeaning uniformity in religion; and, although this religious tyranny is overpast, it cannot be said even now that the sympathies and antipathies of churches and religious bodies have no influence on the enmities and wars of nations. The immediate interests of their own order may often be strong in them, while they have little or no feeling for all that is without.

But is there, then, no rule of right and wrong by which the statesman must guide his steps, no true way in which morality and religion enter into politics? First of all, he has the rule not to do anything as a statesman which as a private individual he would not allow himself to do. A great and good man will not flatter, will not deceive, will not confuse his own interests or those of his party with the interests of his country, will fear no one, will, if he can help it, offend no one. He will feel, though he will not say, that he has a trust committed to him by God, and the greatest of all trusts, for which he must give an account. And sometimes he will need to steady himself in the thought of immortality and eternity against the forces which oppose him, whether the frowns of a sovereign or the dislike of a class or the clamour of the populace. He will sometimes think of another kingdom which is not to be found upon earth. But he will not be fond of arguing merely political questions on moral grounds,

because he knows that in this way he is likely to miss their real drift. He will not expect to learn from Scripture whether the authority of princes shall be maintained, whether some tax or tithe shall be imposed or repealed, whether certain regulations respecting degrees of affinity in marriage shall be enforced or not, whether usury laws are good or bad. The example of Christ will not enable him to determine what measures of relief should be taken in an Irish or Scotch famine, or even in the ordinary management of the poor. These are questions of expediency, in which the best thing to be done is also the right thing, and the best can only be discovered by a close and conscientious study of the facts. There is no revelation of this from heaven; but the spirit of Christ may still be the underlying motive of the statesman's life. And sometimes, amid the piles of statistics, in the hurry and distraction of his work, that motive may be very near and present to him. But he must think as well as feel; he must balance the greater evil which is seen against the lesser which is unseen; he must know how much of an evil must be endured. He has to work through means; he cannot drop out the intermediate steps, or in a mistaken spirit of faith undertake some great enterprise.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 239–42.)

Interpretation of Scripture

To understand thoroughly any of the more difficult parts of Scripture requires far more knowledge and ability than to unlock the treasures of ancient philosophy or solve the problems of nature. It is

not the study of a day or of a year, but is and ought to be to every one, especially to the clergyman, the study of our whole life. But how can those of us who have never learnt to study at all, learn to study Scripture, who have never gained even the ordinary power of fixing the attention, who have never known what it was to labour day after day at the same subject. To such the study of Scripture becomes helpless and hopeless; if they are religious men they read it again and again, but only find there what they believed before. Here is the word of life—we call it so and think it so—and yet how strange that we never cared to acquire the power of understanding it, of so methodizing and arranging our thoughts that we may have the power of explaining it to others.

(*College Sermons*, 7–8.)

Faith and Experience

It sometimes seems as if there were a great difference between the lesson which faith teaches and which experience teaches about the world and about ourselves. Faith tells of another life, experience of this; the one assures us of the infinite power and goodness of God, the other recalls us to the knowledge of human nature and the sense of our own weakness. Faith speaks to us of divine grace, of spiritual gifts, of the heart turned in a moment from darkness to light. Experience reminds us of the force of circumstances, of the slow growth of habit, of the ever-returning power of passions, prejudices, and opinions. The one comforts us with the thought that at any moment God can forgive; the other warns us again that after a certain age it is almost

impossible for us to change. Faith and hope joining hands lead us to believe that ere we die we shall be fit to die, and in some way or other renewed in the image of Christ. Experience assures us that, in nine cases out of ten, we shall be as we are though years increase upon us, and death draws to our gates, and that until our eyes close to it this world will not vanish from our sight. Lastly, faith tells us that in a thousand ways God's watchful care is about our bed and about our path, that our life itself is a miracle of so many years' standing, that He hears our prayers and provides for our wants. Experience presents us with the other side of the truth, which whether we will or no takes us by force, and compels us to admit that never in any case have the laws of nature been interfered with for our sake, or the slightest appearance been discernible of any variation in the order of the world.

Such are a few of the contrasts between faith and sight, involving obviously a different set of principles, and leading to different ways of acting; affecting our practice at least as much as speculation.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 227–8.)

Faith without Knowledge, and Knowledge without Faith

Faith without knowledge is a wilful and unmeaning thing, which can never guide men into light and truth. It will pervert their notions of God; it will transfer them from one religion to another; it may and often has undermined their sense of right and wrong. It has no experience of life or of history, no power of understanding or foreseeing the

nature of the struggle which is going on in the human heart or the movements which affect churches, and which, as ecclesiastical history shows, always have been and will be again. It is apt to rest on some misapplied quotation from Scripture, and to claim for its own creed, theories, and fancies, the authority of inspiration. It is ready to assent to anything, or at least to anything which is in accordance with its own religious feeling, and it has no sense of falsehood and truth. It is fatal to the bringing up of children, because it never takes the right means to its ends, and has never learned to discern differences of character. It never perceives where it is in this world. It is narrowed to its own faith and the articles of its creed, and has no power of embracing all men in the arms of love, or in the purposes of God. It is an element of division among mankind, and not of union. It might be compared to a fire, which gives warmth but not life or growth—which, instead of training or cherishing the tender plants, dries them up, and takes away their spring of youth.

But then, again, knowledge without faith is feeble and powerless, unsuited to our condition in this world, supplying no sufficient motive of human action. It is apt to sink into isolation and selfishness, and seems rather to detach us from God and our fellow men than to unite us to them. It is likely to pass into a cold and sceptical temper of mind, which sees only the difficulties that surround us, and thinks that one thing is as good as another, and that nothing in this world signifies. This is a temper of mind which is the ruin of the head as well as of the heart; for no man can pursue knowledge with success who has not some sense of the

higher purposes of knowledge, some faith in the future, some hope that the far-off result of his labours will be the good of man, and the fulfilment of the will of God in the world.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 57–8.)

The Psalms in Public Worship

No doubt our Services would have a more Christian spirit if some passages of Scripture had been omitted. Some of them may be regarded as merely historical narratives; but this explanation will not apply to others. We are not bound to give our assent either to the conception of God, or the acts or words of inspired men, if our conscience revolts at them, merely because they are found in Scripture or read in churches. Nothing has ever surpassed the Psalms in depth and purity of devotion. 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?' Or 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil;' or again, 'Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God from everlasting and world without end.' But because I find in these and the like simple words the highest expression of Christian faith, I am not therefore justified in consenting to the words of the Psalmist, 'Blessed shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us,' having learned another lesson, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to

them that hate you;' or in approving the words of the prophetess, 'Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof;' still less in transferring these words to the enemies of the Lord in other ages, or to the religious party which is opposed to me. Nor when I hear the narrative of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, who after the execution of Saul's sons took sackcloth and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, or the beasts of the field by night, am I bound to side with the superstition of a half-civilized age against the natural affection of a Mother in Israel. (*College Sermons*, 289–91.)

Belief of the Heart

There is the belief of the head and the belief of the heart. And these two blend together in one. As the heart believes, the objects of belief gradually clear and become definite to us. We no longer use words merely: we feel within us that they have a meaning: but our inward experience becomes the rock on which we stand: it is like the consciousness of our own existence. Can I doubt that He who has taught me to serve Him from my youth upward —He who supported me in that illness, who brought me near to the gates of death and left me not alone, is none other than God Himself? Can I doubt that He who gave me the impulse to devote myself to His work and to the good of mankind, who in some way inexplicable to me enables me to calm the violence of passion, the thought of envy, malice, impurity, to whom I go to lay open my breast and cleanse the thoughts of my heart, can be none other

than the true God? Can it be that that example which He has given me in the life of His Son is other than the truth for me and all mankind? Here we seem to have found the right starting-point. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.'

(*College Sermons*, 21–2.)

The Evil of Sectarianism

Does anybody think it a good thing that this country should be divided into two nearly equal parts, feeling more acutely their antagonism to one another than their common relation to Christ? When men have persuaded themselves (perhaps on the ground that they alone have the true form of Church Government, whether Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Independent) that their Church is exclusively the Church of God, then, instead of learning, like their Father who is in heaven, to embrace all other men in the arms of their love, their affections become narrowed and fixed on persons of their own sect; those who agree with them they call good, those who disagree with them evil; they concentrate their minds on some notion, some power, some practice, which they desire to maintain or exercise; they will even make God the author of their fancies and assume a Divine authority for some minute point of doctrine, some trifle of ritual, some external form, some ancient metaphysical subtlety, forgetting that the sum of real religion must ever be 'to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.' This is a page, or rather many pages, in the history of the Christian Church, and suggests one reason why Christianity has failed so much in carrying out

its objects, because the spirit of party has taken the place of the spirit of Christ—the spirit of violence and persecution in former ages which has dwindled into the spirit of enmity and dislike and detraction in our own. (*College Sermons*, 108–9.)

The weakness of Religious Feelings

There is no road to moral or intellectual improvement like the knowledge of our own defects. Such facts are the easiest to forget and the hardest to bear in mind. Vanity casts its transparent veil over them, and the praise of other men makes them glitter for a moment in the sunshine; and high position or office covers them with the conventionalities of life; and sometimes even religion blinds or seems to blind us, by showing us the end without the means, and exhorting us to enter into communion with God, as if we could thus lay aside what the Apostle terms the body of death, that is, old habits, tastes, passions, or the peculiar temptations of our natural constitution itself. Then comes the painful lesson of experience, that to a limited extent only we are capable of receiving impressions of religion, and that oftentimes the most intense spiritual states are followed by disgust and after-reaction. We begin to reflect why it is that Christian life is so little like a progress towards perfection; why, as they get older, men seem to grow in knowledge or experience of life, but (if such an expression may be allowed) to have taken in all the religion of which they are capable. Why, we ask, do the same failings so often remain, even after men are regenerate and under the influence of religion—irritability, gloom, want of straight-

forwardness, jealousy, the spirit of detraction, the desire of advancement and the like; so that some religious men seem to be of little more use in their day and generation than those who have no religion? They have sought for religion in the abstract, and they have got a religion unequal to any of the duties of life. They did not recognize how they are the creatures of habit and of circumstances, and how dependent on natural constitution and bodily state; and they have done, as it were, violence to nature, in taking spiritual means only, to compass natural ends. As if in medicine, we attempted to strengthen the muscles by exciting the nerves, or hoped to cure a deeply seated organic disease by merely composing the mind.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 244–6.)

God, not Party

When a man's mind is full of the simple truths of Christianity and of the simple duties of the Christian life, he will not be much affected by the strife of parties or the controversies of the hour. He knows that such controversies have always gone on from the days of St. Paul until now, and that they will be still going on in the next generation, when we are removed from the scene. He is amazed at their pertinacity and sometimes at their unmeaningness, but they do not take any hold on his mind or fill him with alarms about the future of religion. For he is seeking to lay a foundation of another sort; to bring men together, not to divide them; to show them their misunderstandings, to be able to say to them amid all their dissensions: 'Ye are all one in

Christ Jesus.' And his anxieties are not about the definition of some doctrine, but about his own life: 'Is he becoming better? Is he doing enough for his fellow creatures? Is he making this life a preparation for another?' When he hears of great religious movements he will be prone to ask: 'What practical good will result from them?' and will be eager to turn them to the improvement of mankind before the blighting influence of party has taken possession of them. Perhaps he may sometimes have to stand out of the way, 'under the shelter of a wall,' until the storm has passed over. But as he finds that his inward peace is unshaken, so too he will find that the world is not so intolerant as it is said to be, and that with a little prudence he may possess his soul in peace.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 268–9.)

Religion and Science not opposed

There is nothing really opposed in religion and science, though there are many false oppositions as well as false reconcilements of them. But we must be content to see in times of transition their paths diverge, when the one goes forward and the other remains behind, or when the vigour of youth in the one comes into conflict with the traditions of antiquity in the other. Meanwhile, let us not be too much the servants of the hour, falling under the dominion of this or that theory which happens to be in the air, but balancing the present with the future and with the past, and not forgetting the great thoughts of other ages in the progress of natural knowledge or of material well-being. Still, we know that the

advancing tide of natural science cannot be driven back; nor is there the least reason to suppose that the sentiment of religion will ever be banished from the human heart; and this consideration may lead us to expect a time when they may be reconciled, if not perfectly, yet more than at present; when religion may be enlightened, extended, purified, and philosophy or science inspired and elevated, and both allied together in the service of God and man.

And even now we can imagine individuals in whom no such opposition is found to exist, whose minds shrink from no investigation, and are not startled by any real conclusions from facts; who have a sense of the perfect innocence of critical inquiries into Scripture and speculations about the origin of man, and yet live in faith and in communion with God, and are impartial, not because they have no religion, but because they leave the result with Him. They are sensible that God has assigned them a work which is as much His work as the preaching of the Gospel by ministers of religion. Regarding all truth as a revelation of God, they have no egotism which leads them to maintain their own ideas or discoveries in preference to those of others. They receive the wonders of nature like the kingdom of God in the Gospel, knowing that in a few years their powers will begin to fail, and this will be the only way in which they can receive them. Already they seem to themselves like children playing upon the sands of the ocean. And in the hour of death, when their eyes close upon external nature, they know that He is mindful of them, and that to Him they will return.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 20–2.)

Criticism and Reality

In these days there are many things which we must criticize, although they are the foundation of our lives, for otherwise they would become mere words, and have no meaning to us. We cannot expect that without any effort of thought we can understand the thoughts of 2,500 years ago. The realities which underlie our criticism, though manifested in different forms, remain the same; though the world grows old they change not; though at times obscured they are again revealed, deriving, as in past so also in future ages, light and meaning from the history and experience of mankind.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 76.)

The Duty of the Critical Student

To the poor and uneducated, at times to all, no better advice can be given for the understanding of Scripture than to read the Bible humbly with prayer. The critical and metaphysical student requires another sort of rule for which this can never be made a substitute. His duty is to throw himself back into the times, the modes of thought, the language of the Apostolic age. He must pass from the abstract to the concrete, from the ideal and intellectual to the spiritual, from later statements of faith or doctrine to the words of inspiration which fell from the lips of the first believers. He must seek to conceive the religion of Christ in its relation to the religions of other ages and distant countries, to the philosophy of our own or other times; and if in this effort his mind seems to fail or waver, he must

win back in life and practice the hold on the truths of the Gospel which he is beginning to lose in the mazes of speculation.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 366.)

The Manifestation of God

There are some persons who believe only in what they see, and God they cannot see; there are some persons who accept only what is definite, and God cannot be defined; there are some persons upon whose minds an impression is only produced by poetry or painting, and the greatest art of Italian or any other poet or painter cannot depict or describe God. There are another class again who would reject any God whose existence cannot be demonstrated to them on the principles of inductive science. To all these, righteousness, holiness, truth, love, instead of being attributes of God and the most real of all powers in the world, are fancies of mystics, or abstractions of philosophers.

I know that the record in which this divine goodness is presented to us is fragmentary, and that we cannot altogether separate the thoughts of Christ Himself from the impressions which the disciples and evangelists formed of Him. But is this any reason for our not attempting to frame an idea of God, the highest and holiest which we can? If there be anything in the narrative of the Gospels that is discordant or inconsistent, either with itself or other truths not known in that age of the world, that is not to be insisted upon as a part of our religion. Our duty as Christians is not to inquire whether this or that word of Christ has been pre-

served with superhuman accuracy, but to seek to form the highest idea of God which we can, and to implant it in our minds and in our lives.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 85–6.)

Evidences of God in the Universe

That which seems to underlie our conception both of first and final causes, is the idea of law which we see not broken or intercepted, or appearing only in particular spots of nature, but everywhere and in all things. All things do not equally exhibit marks of design, but all things are equally subject to the operation of law. The highest mark of intelligence pervades the whole; no one part is better than another; it is all 'very good.' The absence of design, if we like so to turn the phrase, is a part of the design. Even the less comely parts, like the plain spaces in a building, have elements of use and beauty. He who has ever thought in the most imperfect manner of the universe which modern science unveils, needs no evidence that the details of it are incapable of being framed by anything short of a Divine power. Art, and nature, and science, these three—the first giving us the conception of the relation of parts to a whole; the second, of endless variety and intricacy, such as no art has ever attained; the third, of uniform laws which amid all the changes of created things remain fixed as at the first, reaching even to the heavens—are the witnesses of the Creator in the external world.

Nor can it weaken our belief in a Supreme Being, to observe that the same harmony and uniformity extend also to the actions of men. Why should

it be thought a thing incredible that God should give law and order to the spiritual, no less than the natural creation? That human beings do not 'thrust or break their ranks'; that the life of nations, like that of plants or animals, has a regular growth; that the same strata or stages are observable in the religions, no less than the languages of mankind, as in the structure of the earth, are strange reasons for doubting the Providence of God. Perhaps it is even stranger, that those who do not doubt should eye with jealousy the accumulation of such facts. Do we really wish that our conceptions of God should only be on the level of the ignorant; adequate to the passing emotions of human feeling, but to reason inadequate? That Christianity is the confluence of many channels of human thought does not interfere with its Divine origin. It is not the less immediately the word of God because there have been preparations for it in all ages, and in many countries.

The more we take out of the category of chance in the world either of nature or of mind, the more present evidence we have of the faithfulness of God. We do not need to have a chapter of accidents in life to enable us to realize the existence of a personal God, as though events which we can account for were not equally His work. Let not use or custom so prevail in our minds as to make this higher notion of God cheerless or uncomfortable to us. The rays of His presence may still warm us, as well as enlighten us. Surely He, in whom we live and move and have our being, is nearer to us than He would be if He interfered occasionally for our benefit.

'The curtain of the physical world is closing in upon us:' What does this mean but that the arms of His intelligence are embracing us on every side? We have no more fear of nature; for our knowledge of the laws of nature has cast out fear. We know Him as He shows Himself in them, even as we are known of Him. Do we think to draw near to God by returning to that state in which nature seemed to be without law, when man cowered like the animals before the storm, and in the meteors of the skies and the motions of the heavenly bodies sought to read the purposes of God respecting himself? Or shall we rest in that stage of the knowledge of nature which was common to the heathen philosophers and to the Fathers of the Christian Church? or in that of two hundred years ago, ere the laws of the heavenly bodies were discovered? or of fifty years ago, before geology had established its truths on sure foundations? or of thirty years ago, ere the investigation of old language had revealed the earlier stages of the history of the human mind? At which of these resting-places shall we pause to renew the covenant between Reason and Faith? Rather at none of them, if the first condition of a true faith be the belief in all true knowledge.

To trace our belief up to some primitive revelation, to entangle it in a labyrinth of proofs or analogies, will not infix it deeper or elevate its character. Why should we be willing to trust the convictions of the father of the human race rather than our own, the faith of primitive rather than of civilized times? Or why should we use arguments about the Infinite Being, which, in proportion as

they have force, reduce him to the level of the finite; and which seem to lose their force in proportion as we admit that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts? The belief is strong enough without those fictitious supports; it cannot be made stronger with them. While nature still presents to us this world of unexhausted wonders; while sin and sorrow lead us to walk by faith, and not by sight; while the soul of man departs this life not knowing whither it goes, so long will the belief endure of an Almighty Creator, from whom we came, to whom we return.

Why, again, should we argue for the immortality of the soul from the analogy of the seed and the tree, or the state of human beings before and after birth, when the ground of proof in the one case is wanting in the other, namely, experience? Because the dead acorn may a century hence become a spreading oak, no one would infer that the corrupted remains of animals will rise to life in new forms. The error is not in the use of such illustrations as figures of speech, but in the allegation of them as proofs or evidences after the failure of the analogy is perceived. Perhaps it may be said that in popular discourse they pass unchallenged; it may be a point of honour that they should be maintained, because they are in Paley or Butler. But evidences for the many which are not evidences for the few are treacherous props to Christianity. They are always liable to come back to us detected, and to need some other fallacy for their support.

Let it be considered, whether the evidences of religion should be separated from religion itself. The Gospel has a truth perfectly adapted to human

nature; its origin and diffusion in the world have a history like any other history. But truth does not need evidences of the truth, nor does history separate the proof of facts from the facts themselves. It was only in the decline of philosophy the Greeks began to ask about the criterion of knowledge. What would be thought of an historian who should collect all the testimonies on one side of some disputed question, and insist on their reception as a political creed? Such evidences do not require the hand of some giant infidel to pull them down; they fall the moment they are touched. But the Christian faith is in its holy place, uninjured by the fall; the truths of the existence of God, or of the immortality of the soul, are not perilled by the observation that some analogies on which they have been supposed to rest are no longer tenable. There is no use in attempting to prove by the misapplication of the methods of human knowledge, what we ought never to doubt.

'There are two things,' says a philosopher of the last century, 'of which it may be said, that the more we think of them, the more they fill the soul with awe and wonder—the starry heaven above, and the moral law within. I may not regard either as shrouded in darkness, or look for or guess at either in what is beyond, out of my sight. I see them right before me, and link them at once with the consciousness of my own existence. The former of the two begins with place, which I inhabit as a member of the outward world, and extends the connexion in which I stand with it into immeasurable space; in which are worlds upon worlds, and systems upon systems; and so on into the endless

times of their revolutions, their beginning and continuance. The second begins with my invisible self; that is to say, my personality, and presents me in a world which has true infinity, but which the lower faculty of the soul can hardly scan; with which I know myself to be not only as in the world of sight, in an accidental connexion, but in a necessary and universal one. The first glance at innumerable worlds annihilates any importance which I may attach to myself as an animal structure; whilst the matter out of which it is made must again return to the earth (itself a mere point in the universe), after it has been endued, one knows not how, with the power of life for a little season. The second glance exalts me infinitely as an intelligent being, whose personality involves a moral law, which reveals in me a life distinct from that of the animals, independent of the world of sense. So much at least I may infer from the regular determination of my being by this law, which is itself infinite, free from the limitations and conditions of this present life.'

So, in language somewhat technical, has Kant described two great principles of natural religion. 'There are two witnesses,' we may add in a later strain of reflection, 'of the being of God; the order of nature in the world, and the progress of the mind of man. He is not the order of nature, nor the progress of mind, nor both together; but that which is above and beyond them; of which they, even if conceived in a single instant, are but the external sign, the highest evidences of God which we can conceive, but not God Himself. The first to the ancient world seemed to be the work of chance, or the personal operation of one or many Divine beings.

We know it to be the result of laws endless in their complexity, and yet not the less admirable for their simplicity also. The second has been regarded, even in our own day, as a series of errors capriciously invented by the ingenuity of individual men. We know it to have a law of its own, a continuous order which cannot be inverted; not to be confounded with, yet not wholly separate from, the law of nature and the will of God. Shall we doubt the world to be the creation of a Divine power, only because it is more wonderful than could have been conceived by "them of old time"; or human reason to be in the image of God, because it too bears the marks of an overruling law or intelligence?'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 234–9.)

The Sacraments

There seems to be no better explanation of the Sacraments than this, that they are the expressions of a religious feeling. The Sacrament of Baptism is not designed to draw an invidious line between baptized and unbaptized infants, but to express the Christian consciousness about all infants that they are the children of God, and that, in the language of our Lord, 'Their Angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven.' The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in like manner, is not separable from the rest of the believer's life. He is always desirous to follow Christ and to be one with Him, and to be as He was in this world. Of that hope and aspiration, so much above the ordinary life of man, of that prayer and vow, the Communion is the highest, the intensified expression.

And, as men find a relief in the utterance of their feelings, so does he find a relief in the conscious acknowledgement that his highest desire in this world is to be perfect, to be like Christ. And, as men after a long and weary toil will meet together at a feast to refresh their spirits and to bind closer the bonds of friendship, so does he go to the table of the Lord that he may draw closer the bonds which unite him to Christ, that like Christ he may forgive his enemies, like Christ he may live only for the good of others, like Christ he may be pure and disinterested in word and thought, and have communion with goodness and truth everywhere.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 308–9.)

Good and Evil in Religion

All human things are imperfect, and the good and evil in them grow together, and are inextricably entwined with one another. There is greater good, and perhaps greater evil, in religion than in anything else, and a more subtle combination of them than in other forms of life and action. In a critical age such as our own this blended mass of good and evil is easily decomposed. Mankind are always turning out the seamy side of religion to the light. They see that the practice of professing Christians in daily life scarcely has any relation to the precepts of Christ. They reckon up the crimes of churches in former ages; the bloody wars, the terrible persecutions, the slavery of the mind, worse than the confinement of the body, which fanaticism and superstition have brought upon the world. They

find even now the spirit of religious party clogging the efforts made by statesmen and others for the education and improvement of mankind. They observe that those who make no profession of religion are often more honourable and upright in their dealings than those who are very much under the influence of religious beliefs. Considering all these things, they are tempted to think with the Roman poet of old that the new negation of religion is an emancipation and enlargement of human nature. They are happy in having cast under their feet the traditions of priests, the curious lore of sacred books, the terrors of the world to come. Their text is 'Tantum relligio potuit suadere malorum.' Without denying the existence of God, they believe that nothing is to be known of Him, and that He can only be connected with us, if at all, by the laws of external nature.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 117–8.)

'Doubtful Disputations'

The words 'This is My Body,' 'This is My Blood,' have occasioned controversies and speculation such as no metaphysician can ever explain. Who can tell us the difference between transubstantiation and consubstantiation unless he can first analyse the meaning of the word 'substance'? Who can give the faintest conception of a real presence, or a real spiritual presence of a Divine nature in a material object?

Behold! He is present everywhere, and especially in the heart and reason of man. Are not such distinctions like lines drawn upon an imaginary

surface, or a picture painted in space? and they lead us on by a sort of dialectical process immediately to raise other questions which are not less difficult. In what manner, and by what means, is the change in the elements affected, and at what time is their nature altered? at their consecration, or after we have partaken only? And do all partake of them, or the worthy recipients only? And has the minister, who is a man like ourselves, the power of granting or withholding the greatest of spiritual benefits, of making, and offering (I hardly dare use the words) the Body and Blood of Christ? Then follows the transfer of all the powers of the life to come to a human being, and you have a lever long enough to move the world.

Owing to a corruption, beginning you can hardly say when, in an excess of religious feeling, the moral character of religion is lost; and the Sacrament, instead of being the simple bond which unites Christians to their brethren and to Christ, becomes the bond of a great ecclesiastical power.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 304–5.)

Exaggerations of Religious Feeling

It is doubtful whether exaggerated books of piety, resting upon no knowledge of human life, can really do good. They neither enlarge, nor elevate, nor liberalize men's views of religion. They demand a perpetual strain on the mind. A man is never to say, 'Thank God for guiding me in innocence through the day,' but, 'Forgive me for all my best deeds.' This tends to obliterate all distinction between right and wrong.

Would it be possible to combine in a manual of piety religious fervour with perfect good sense and knowledge of the world? This has never been attempted, and would be a work worthy of a great genius.

Is it possible to feel a personal attachment to Christ such as is prescribed by Thomas à Kempis? I think that it is impossible, and contrary to human nature, that we should be able to concentrate our thoughts on a person scarcely known to us, who lived 1,800 years ago. But there might be such a passionate longing and yearning for goodness and truth. The personal Christ might become the ideal Christ, and this would easily pass into the idea of goodness.

The debasement of the individual before the Divine Being is really a sort of Pantheism, so far that in the moral world God is everything and man nothing. But man thus debased before God is no proper or rational worshipper of Him. There is a want of proportion in this sort of religion. God who is everything is not really so much as if He allowed the most exalted free agencies to exist side by side with Him. The greater the beings under Him, the greater He is.

Is it possible for me, perhaps ten years hence, to write a new Thomas à Kempis, going as deeply into the foundations of human life, and yet not revolting the common sense of the nineteenth century by his violent contrast between this world and another? (*Life*, ii. 151–2.)

VII

THE RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

The Comparative Study of Religions

Among the many causes at present in existence which will influence 'the Church of the future,' none is likely to have greater power than our increasing knowledge of the religions of mankind. The study of them is the first step in the philosophical study of revelation itself. For Christianity or the Mosaic religion, standing alone, is hardly a subject for scientific inquiry: only when compared with other forms of faith do we perceive its true place in history, or its true relation to human nature. The glory of Christianity is not to be as unlike other religions as possible, but to be their perfection and fulfilment. Those religions are so many steps in the education of the human race. One above another, they rise or grow side by side, each nation, in many ages, contributing some partial ray of a divine light, some element of morality, some principle of social life, to the common stock of mankind. The thoughts of men, like the productions of Nature, do not endlessly diversify; they work themselves out in a few simple forms. In the fullness of time, philosophy appears, shaking off, yet partly retaining, the nation-

ality and particularity of its heathen origin. Its top 'reaches to heaven,' but it has no root in the common life of man. At last, the crown of all, the chief corner-stone of the building, when the impressions of Nature and the reflections of the mind upon itself have been exhausted, Christianity arises in the world, seeming to stand in the same relation to the inferior religions that man does to the inferior animals. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 186.)

Buddhism

That there is a faith which has a greater number of worshippers than all sects of Christians put together, which originated in a reformation of society, tyrannized over by tradition, spoiled by philosophy, torn asunder by caste—which might be described, in the words of Scripture, as a 'preaching of the Gospel to the poor'; that this faith, besides its more general resemblance to Christianity, has its incarnation, its monks, its saints, its hierarchy, its canonical books, its miracles, its councils, the whole system being 'full blown' before the Christian era; that the founder of this religion descended from a throne to teach the lesson of equality among men—('there is no distinction of' Chinese or Hindoo, Brahmin or Sudra, such at least was the indirect consequence of his doctrine)—that, himself contented with nothing, he preached to his followers the virtues of poverty, self-denial, chastity, temperance, and that once, at least, he is described as 'taking upon himself the sins of mankind':—these are facts which, when once known, are not easily forgotten; they seem to open an undiscovered world to us, and

to cast a new light on Christianity itself. And it 'harrows us with fear and wonder' to learn that this vast system, numerically the most universal or catholic of all religions, and, in many of its leading features, most like Christianity, is based, not on the hope of eternal life, but of complete annihilation.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 188.)

The Value of Comparative Theology

The study of 'comparative theology' not only helps to distinguish the accidents from the essence of Christianity; it also affords a new kind of testimony to its truth; it shows what the world was aiming at through many cycles of human history—what the Gospel alone fulfilled. The Gentile religions, from being enemies, became witnesses of the Christian faith. They are no longer adverse positions held by the powers of evil, but outworks or buttresses, like the courts of the Temple on Mount Sion, covering the holy place. Granting that some of the doctrines and teachers of the heathen world were nearer the truth than we once supposed, such resemblances cause no alarm or uneasiness; we have no reason to fable that they are the fragments of some primaeval revelation. We look forwards, not backwards; to the end, not to the beginning; not to the garden of Eden, but to the life of Christ. There is no longer any need to maintain a thesis; we have the perfect freedom and real peace which is attained by the certainty that we know all, and that nothing is kept back. Such was the position of Christianity in former ages; it was on a level with the knowledge of mankind. But in later years unworthy fear has

too often paralysed its teachers: instead of seeking to readjust its relations to the present state of history and science, they have clung in agony to the past. For the Gospel is the child of light; it lives in the light of this world; it has no shifts or concealments; there is no kind of knowledge which it needs to suppress; it allows us to see the good in all things; it does not forbid us to observe also the evil which has incrusted upon itself. It is willing that we should look calmly and steadily at all the facts of the history of religion. It takes no offence at the remark, that it has drawn into itself the good of other religions; that the laws and institutions of the Roman Empire have supplied the outer form, and heathen philosophy some of the inner mechanism which was necessary to its growth in the world. No violence is done to its spirit by the enumeration of the causes which have led to its success. It permits us also to note, that while it has purified the civilization of the West, there are soils of earth on which it seems hardly capable of living without becoming corrupt or degenerate. Such knowledge is innocent and a 'creature of God.' And considering how much of the bitterness of Christians against one another arises from ignorance and a false conception of the nature of religion, it is not chimerical to imagine that the historical study of religions may be a help to Christian charity. The least differences seem often to be the greatest; the perception of the greater differences makes the lesser insignificant. Living within the sphere of Christianity, it is good for us sometimes to place ourselves without; to turn away from 'the weak and beggarly elements' of worn-out controversies to contemplate

the great phases of human existence. Looking at the religions of mankind, succeeding one another in a wonderful order, it is hard to narrow our minds to party or sectarian views in our own age or country. Had it been known that a dispute about faith and works existed among Buddhists, would not this knowledge have modified the great question of the Reformation? Such studies have also a philosophical value as well as a Christian use. They may, perhaps, open to us a new page in the history of our own minds, as well as in the history of the human race. Mankind, in primitive times, seem at first sight very unlike ourselves: as we look upon them with sympathy and interest, a likeness begins to appear; in us too there is a piece of the primitive man; many of his wayward fancies are the caricatures of our errors or perplexities. If a clearer light is ever to be thrown either on the nature of religion or of the human mind, it will come, not from analyses of the individual or from inward experience, but from a study of the mental history of mankind, and especially of those ages in which human nature was fusile, still not yet cast in a mould, and rendered incapable of receiving new creations or impressions.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 192–4.)

The Sources of Corruption in Religion

* If we turn from ecclesiastical history to the larger page of the religions of the world, we see the same tendencies at work, to organization, to ritualism, to disputes about doctrines—and often about the same doctrines; and they have had similar

revivals. Nor can we say that mankind have shown any aversion to religion, or that the popular beliefs in all times have not found ready recipients. In early ages the tendencies to belief and not to unbelief have been the sources of corruption in religion. They thought that they could never have too much religion, or too many observances, until human life sank under the burden, and the power to move upward was gone. The Brahmin was so overweighted with his religious books, so bound hand and foot within the trammels of his ceremonial, that he had no power to lift up his eyes to the God and Father of us all; and the first principles of right and wrong seemed to him insignificant in comparison with the recitation of a verse out of the Vedas or the performance of a ceremonial according to a prescribed mode. A fatal power hung over him which he was unable to resist, and still more unable in every succeeding age than he had been in the preceding. He could bind the chains fast, but he could not shake them off. He could repeat the same prayer to the Sun which his ancestors had uttered 3,000 years ago, but he could not approach the true light. He could define more and more, he could describe the Vedas in more and more exaggerated language. But to take a step backward to simplicity and truth was beyond his power: such an impulse must come to him from without—from some foreign nation, from some new species of knowledge, from the progress of the mechanical arts. The organization to which he belonged was impervious to any truth; and, as the world seemed to advance, retired more and more into the distance, wrapt in ancient pride, and fortified by the practice of religious exercises,

unshaken in the faith that they alone are the twice-born race and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. (*Unpublished.*)

The Growth of Early Religions

The theory of a primitive tradition, common to all mankind, has only to be placed distinctly before the mind to make us aware that it is the fabric of a vision. But, even if it were conceivable, it would be inconsistent with facts. Ancient history says nothing of a general religion, but of particular national ones; of received beliefs about places and persons, about animal life, about the sun, moon, and stars, about the Divine essence permeating the world, about gods in the likeness of men appearing in battles and directing the course of states, about the shades below, about sacrifices, purifications, initiations, magic, mysteries. These were the religions of nature, which in historical times have received from custom also a second nature. Early poetry shows us the same religions in a previous stage, while they are still growing, and fancy is freely playing around the gods of its own creation. Language and mythology carry us a step further back, into a mental world yet more distant and more unlike our own. That world is a prison of sense, in which outward objects take the place of ideas; in which morality is a fact of nature, and 'wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.' Human beings in that prehistoric age seem to have had only a kind of limited intelligence; they were the slaves, as we should say, of association. They were rooted in particular spots, or wandered

up and down upon the earth, confusing themselves and God and nature, gazing timidly on the world around, starting at their very shadows, and seeing in all things a superhuman power at the mercy of which they were. They had no distinction of body and soul, mind and matter, physical and moral. Their conceptions were neither here nor there; neither sensible objects, nor symbols of the unseen. Their gods were very near; the neighbouring hill or passing stream, brute matter as we regard it, to them a divinity, because it seemed inspired with a life like their own. They could not have formed an idea of the whole earth, much less of the God who made it. Their mixed modes of thought, their figures of speech, which are not figures, their personifications of nature, their reflections of the individual upon the world, and of the world upon the individual, the omnipresence to them of the sensuous and visible, indicate an intellectual state which it is impossible for us, with our regular divisions of thought, even to conceive. We must raze from the table of the mind their language, ere they could become capable of a universal religion.

But although we find no vestiges of a primaeval revelation, and cannot imagine how such a revelation could have been possible consistently with those indications of the state of man which language and mythology supply, it is true, nevertheless, that the primitive peoples of mankind have a religious principle common to all. Religion, rather than reason, is the faculty of man in the earliest stage of his existence. Reverence for powers above him is the first principle which raises the individual out of himself; the germ of political order, and probably

also of social life. It is the higher necessity of nature, as hunger and the animal passions are the lower. 'The clay' falls before the rising dawn; it may stumble over stocks and stones; but it is struggling upwards into a higher day. The worshipper is drawn as by a magnet to some object out of himself. He is weak and must have a god; he has the feeling of a slave towards his master, of a child towards its parents, of the lower animals towards himself. The being whom he serves is, like himself, passionate and capricious; he sees him starting up everywhere in the unmeaning accidents of life. The good which he values himself he attributes to him; there is no proportion in his ideas; the great power of nature is the lord also of sheep and oxen. Sometimes, with childish joy, he invites the god to drink of his beverage or eat of his food; at other times, the orgies which he enacts before him, lead us seriously to ask the question 'whether religion may not in truth have been a kind of madness.' He propitiates him and is himself soothed and comforted; again he is at his mercy, and propitiates him again. So the dream of life is rounded to the poor human creature: incapable as he is of seeing his true Father, religion seems to exercise over him a fatal overpowering influence; the religion of nature we cannot call it, for that would of itself lead to a misconception, but the religion of the place in which he lives, of the objects which he sees, of the tribe to which he belongs, of the animal forms which range in the wilds around him, mingling strangely with the witness of his own spirit that there is in the world a being above him.

Out of this troubled and perplexed state of the human fancy the great religions of the world arose, all of them in different degrees affording a rest to the mind, and reducing to rule and measure the wayward impulses of human nature. All of them had a history in antecedent ages; there is no stage in which they do not offer indications of an earlier religion which preceded them. Whether they came into being, like some geological formations, by slow deposits, or, like others, by the shock of an earthquake, that is, by some convulsion and settlement of the human mind, is a question which may be suggested, but cannot be answered. The Hindoo Pantheon, even in the antique form in which the world of deities is presented in the Vedas, implies a growth of fancy and ceremonial which may have continued for thousands of years. Probably at a much earlier period than we are able to trace them, religions, like languages, had their distinctive characters with corresponding differences in the first rude constitution of society. As in the case of languages, it is a fair subject of inquiry, whether they do not all mount up to some elementary type in which they were more nearly allied to sense; a primaeval religion, in which we may imagine the influence of nature was analogous to the first impressions of the outward world on the infant's wondering eyesight, and the earliest worship may be compared with the first use of signs or stammering of speech. Such a religion we may conceive as springing from simple instinct; yet an instinct higher, even in its lowest degree, than the instinct of the animal creation; in which the fear of nature combined with the assertion of sway over it, which had

already a law of progress, and was beginning to set bounds to the spiritual chaos. Of this aboriginal state we only 'entertain conjecture'; it is beyond the horizon, even when the eye is strained to the uttermost.

But if the first origin of the heathen religions is in the clouds, their decline, though a phenomenon with which we are familiar in history, of which in some parts of the world we are living witnesses, is also obscure to us. The kind of knowledge that we have of them is like our knowledge of the ways of animals; we see and observe, but we cannot get inside them; we cannot think or feel with their worshippers. Most or all of them are in a state of decay; they have lost their life or creative power; once adequate to the wants of man, they have ceased to be so for ages. Naturally we should imagine that the religion itself would pass away when its meaning was no longer understood; that with the spirit, the letter too would die; that when the circumstances of a nation changed, the rites of worship to which they had given birth would be forgotten. The reverse is the fact. Old age affords examples of habits which become insane and inveterate at a time when they have no longer an object; that is an image of the antiquity of religions. Modes of worship, rules of purification, set forms of words, cling with a greater tenacity when they have no meaning or purpose. The habit of a week or a month may be thrown off; not the habit of a thousand years. The hand of the past lies heavily on the present in all religions; in the East it is a yoke which has never been shaken off. Empire, freedom, among the educated classes belief may pass away,

and yet the routine of ceremonial continues; the political glory of a religion may be set at the time when its power over the minds of men is most ineradicable.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 211–5.)

The Roman Religion

What the religion of Greece was to philosophy and art, that the Roman religion may be said to have been to political and social life. It was the religion of the family; the religion also of the empire of the world. Beginning in rustic simplicity, the traces of which it ever afterwards retained, it grew with the power of the Roman state, and became one with its laws. No fancy or poetry moulded the forms of the Roman gods; they are wanting in character and hardly distinguishable from one another. Not what they were, but their worship, is the point of interest about them. Those inanimate beings occasionally said a patriotic word at some critical juncture of the Roman affairs, but they had no attributes or qualities; they are the mere impersonation of the needs of the state. They were easily identified in civilized and literary times with the Olympic deities, but the transformation was only superficial. Greece never conquered the religion of its masters. Great as was the readiness in later times to admit the worship of foreign deities, endless as were the forms of private superstition, these intrusions never weakened or broke the legal hold of the Roman religion. It was truly the 'established' religion. It represented the greatness and power of Rome. The deification of the Emperor, though

disagreeable to the more spiritual and intellectual feelings of that age of the world, was its natural development. While Rome lasted the Roman religion lasted; like some vast fabric which the destroyers of a great city are unable wholly to demolish, it continued, though in ruins, after the irruption of the Goths, and has exercised, through the medium of the civil law, a power over modern Europe. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 222–3.)

The Two Great Forms of Religion

I. The sense and practice of the presence of God, the sight of Him, and the knowledge of Him as the great overruling law of progress in the world, whether personal or impersonal; the sympathy and the harmony of the physical and moral, and of something unknown which is greater than either; the God of truth in the dealings of men with one another, and in the universe; the ideal to which all men are growing.

The best of humanity is the most perfect reflection of God: humanity as it might be, not as it is; and the way up to Him is to be found in the lives of the best and greatest men; of saints and legislators and philosophers, the founders of states, and the founders of religions—allowing for, and seeking to correct their necessary onesidedness. These heroes, or demi-gods, or benefactors, as they would have been called by the ancients, are the mediators between God and man. Whither they went we also are going, and may be content to follow in their footsteps.

We are always thinking of ourselves, hardly

ever of God, or of great and good men who are His image. This egotism requires to be abated before we can have any real idea of His true nature. The 'I' is our God—What we shall eat? What we shall drink? What we shall do? How we shall have a flattering consciousness of our own importance? There is no room left for the idea of God, and law, and duty.

II. The second great truth of religion is resignation to the general facts of the world and of life. In Christianity we live, but Christianity is fast becoming one religion among many. We believe in a risen Christ, not risen however in the sense in which a drowning man is restored to life, nor even in the sense in which a ghost is supposed to walk the earth, nor in any sense which we can define or explain. We pray to God as a person, a larger self; but there must always be a *sub-intelligitur* that He is not a person. Our forms of worship, public and private, imply some interference with the course of nature. We know that the empire of law permeates all things.

'You impose upon us with words; you deprive us of all our hopes, joys, motives; you undermine the foundations of morality.'

No! there is no greater comfort, no stronger motive than the knowledge of things as they truly are, apart from illusions and pretences, and conventions, and theological formulas. 'Be not deceived,' God is not other than He is seen to be in this world, if we rightly understand the indications which He gives of Himself. Highest among these indications is the moral law, which exists everywhere and among all men in some degree, and to which

there is no limit, nor ever will be, while the world lasts; the least seed of moral truth possessing an infinite potentiality, and this inspiration for the idea is strengthened and cherished by the efforts of a holy and devoted life, which appears to be the greatest moral power in the world.

Anybody who gives himself up for the good of others, who takes up his cross, will find heaven on this earth, and will trust God for all the rest.

Anybody who accepts facts as they truly are, and in proportion to his knowledge of them, will have no more doubts and difficulties, and reconciliations of science and religion, or inquiries about the date and authorship of the Gospels. To him the historical character of these and other ancient writings sinks into insignificance in comparison with their moral value. (*Life*, ii. 312–4.)

VIII

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

Things which cannot be shaken

THERE appears to be in the minds of many persons a good deal of apprehension about the future of religion. These alarms which have been always felt in all ages of the Church seem in our own day to have increased, and perhaps with some reason. We see powerful influences at work and rapid changes taking place, and we cannot pretend to foretell what will be the course of religious opinion in this or other countries fifty or even twenty years hence. Not only the speculative reconcilement of science and religion appears to be distant, but the practical reconcilement of them in our own life and conduct is not free from difficulty. For we are subject to opposite and discordant influences; we hear one voice speaking to us in the churches and another in the newspapers or the lecture-room. And some persons have thought that they would be quit of the difficulty by being quit of religion; they have gone further and further away from the faith of their fathers, putting the world in the place of God, the laws of nature in the place of moral and spiritual truths. Yet, perhaps, we should not attach too much importance to such changes; for there are

some who, in the days of their youth, have lightly laid aside all regard to religion, and have died in the bosom of an infallible church. And there are others who have gone to the opposite pole, and then in middle life they have found the articles of belief which they had eagerly embraced in youth slipping from under them, and their life has set in darkness and doubt. There have been times in the history of the Church when the true meaning of the Gospel seemed to be almost lost; when, in the beautiful words of the great Catholic historian, 'Christ was in the ship, but asleep;' and to these times of lethargy and vacancy have succeeded other times of revival, awakening, reformation, counter-reformation. Therefore we should look forward in faith to the future, and not be too much influenced by the accidents of the age in which we live—the state of knowledge, the progress of criticism, the conflict of ideas and modes of thinking. Human nature has been so created by God as to be sufficient for itself under all its trials. The world is moving on fast; ideas which are in the air trouble our minds; at times they seem quite to overpower us; and we want to know where, amid the floating sands of opinion, we may find some rock or anchor of the soul.

Is not the answer the same as of old, 'The things which are shaken are being removed, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain'? The law of duty, the standards of morality, the relations of family life are unchanged. No one can truly say that he is uncertain about right and wrong. 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?' The answer is the same as it always was, 'Even by

ruling himself after Thy word.' The nature of true religion is not altered in the latter half of the nineteenth century. 'To do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God;' 'to visit the fatherless and widow, to keep himself unspotted from the world;' to live always 'as unto the Lord, and not unto men'; 'to be kindly affectioned one to another;' to 'take up the cross and follow Christ' (if we are capable of it): which of these precepts is changed by the inquiries of criticism? Which of them does not come home to us, not only as a word of the New Testament, but as a self-evident duty or truth?

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 208–10.)

Religious Progress

Religion has become simpler than formerly; it is not so dependent on language; it is not so much disputed about as in the older times. Mankind have a larger and truer conception of the Divine nature; they have also a wider knowledge of themselves. They see the various forms of Christianity which prevail in their own and other countries, they trace their origin and history, and they rise above them to that higher part of Christian belief which they have in common. Their vision extends yet further, to the great religions of the East, and the controversies and phases of faith which have absorbed them. They set aside lesser perplexing questions, whether of criticism or of philosophy, which are neither important nor capable of being satisfactorily answered. They turn from theology to life, from disputes about the person of Christ to the imitation of Him 'who

went about doing good.' He who begins by asking, 'What is the evidence of miracles? How are the discrepancies of the Gospels to be accounted for? How can the physical and spiritual qualities of man be harmonized?' is losing himself in questions which may continue to be in dispute long after he is in his grave. But to him who asks: 'How can I become better? How can I do the will of God? How can I serve my fellow men? How can I serve Christ?' the answer is in a manner contained in the question. He has the witness in himself of what is holy and just and true. He knows that righteousness and truth are the will of God; and he has the witness of life and history to the consequences of human actions.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 211–2.)

The True Evidences of Christianity

* The world is moving onwards, and there is nothing more likely to hinder the progress of Christianity than the confusion of the accidents of the Christian religion with the essence of it. If we will insist on seeing signs and wonders, or rather on the belief in them, we can hardly maintain that the religion of Christ is equally adapted to all ages and countries. We cannot demand of men, as a condition of salvation, that they should acknowledge any fact except in proportion to the evidence which witnesses to it. What Christ never insisted upon, neither let us insist upon. There is no question raised by Him of the truth of a Supernatural religion. It would only have been by a long course of education that His disciples could have

understood the very meaning of the word. Therefore, without entering on the vexed question of miracles, and without denying that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy,' I think the time has come when we must no longer allow them to be stumbling-blocks in the way of those who desire to be the followers of Christ. The true evidences of Christianity are the public evidences, the effect upon history, and upon the world, and upon the lives of men in our own time. If we could free the Christian religion from the errors which have encrusted upon it in the course of ages; if we could clear it of those charges which men of the world are constantly bringing against it, such as hostility to knowledge or a doubtful regard for truth where the interests of religion are supposed to be concerned; if, when religion grew, morality increased in an equal measure; and the most fervent Christians were also the most honest and upright in business, the most innocent, the most friendly, we should not need treatises on evidence, for the lives of Christian men would be their own self-evidencing light. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' The great and real source of doubt in which all lesser doubts seem to be swallowed up is the apathy and indifference of Christian men, saying one thing and doing another; the strange union or contradiction of individuals equally serious in their vices and in their religion; the small hold which the life of Christ has upon the Christian world. No intellectual arguments have any power to pacify such doubts; the only answer to them is the removal of the grounds upon which they rest. The true internal

evidence of Christianity is the life of Christ in the soul; the true external evidence, the progress of religion in the history of mankind. The difficulties of Christianity really resolve themselves into one difficulty, the weakness and insensibility of the human heart. (*Unpublished.*)

The Brotherhood of all Mankind

'It is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith' (Rom. iii. 30).—Let us turn aside for a moment to consider how great this thought was in that age and country; a thought which the wisest of men had never before uttered, which at the present hour we imperfectly realize, which is still leavening the world, and shall do so until the whole is leavened, and the differences of races, of nations, of castes, of religions, of languages, are finally done away. Nothing could seem a less natural or obvious lesson in the then state of the world, nothing could be more at variance with experience, or more difficult to carry out into practice. Even to us it is hard to imagine that the islander of the South Seas, the pariah of India, the African in his worst estate, is equally with ourselves God's creature. But in the age of St. Paul how great must have been the difficulty of conceiving barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, all colours, forms, races, and languages alike and equal in the presence of God who made them! The origin of the human race was veiled in a deeper mystery to the ancient world, and the lines which separated mankind were harder and stronger; yet the 'love of Christ constraining'

bound together in its cords, those most separated by time or distance, those who were the types of the most extreme differences of which the human form is capable.

The idea of this brotherhood of all mankind, the great family on earth, implies that all men have certain ties with us, and certain rights at our hands. The truest way in which we can regard them is as they appear in the sight of God, from whom they can never suffer wrong; nor from us, while we think of them as His creatures equally with ourselves. There is yet a closer bond with them as our brethren in the Gospel. No one can interpose impediments of rank or fortune, or colour or religious opinion, between those who are one in Christ. Beyond and above such transitory differences is the work of Christ, 'making all things kin.' Moreover, the remembrance of this brotherhood is a rest to us when our 'light is low,' and the world and its distinctions are passing from our sight, and our thoughts are of the dark valley and the solitary way. For it leads us to trust in God, not as selecting us, because He had a favour unto us, but as infinitely just to all mankind. It links our fortunes with those of men in general, and gives us the same support in reference to our eternal destiny, that we receive from each other in a narrow sphere in the concerns of daily life. To think of ourselves, or our Church, or our country, or our age, as the particular exceptions which a Divine mercy makes, whether in this life or another, is not a thought of comfort, but of perplexity. Lastly:—It relieves us from anxiety about the condition of other men, of friends departed, of those ignorant of the

Gospel, of those of a different form of faith from our own; knowing that God who has thus far lifted up the veil, 'will justify the circumcision through faith, and the uncircumcision by faith;' the Jew who fulfils the law, and the Gentile who does by nature the things contained in the law.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 277–8.)

The Church of the Future

The daylight of the nineteenth century may so shine on the religion of Christ that every unreal word, every untrue fact, every uncharitable and immoral doctrine shall be dissociated from the words of Christ. The seeming assent to some hundred disputed propositions may no longer be required of the ministers of religion. And as men are now drawn together by a common belief in the essentials of religion, in the religion of almost all good men, in the religion of almost all men when they are approaching death—so there may also be a somewhat greater variety in outward things, suitable to different countries or classes of men, or to differences of individual character. The changes of which I have spoken may very possibly come to pass during the lifetime of some here present. The Church of England may be disencumbered of some old traditions which weigh upon her; may become wider, larger, freer, more charitable, more tolerant, more in accord with the spirit of the age: and yet the result may be altogether disappointing to those who have sought to effect it. Just as there are individuals who think fairly and truly on most subjects, who are not fanatical partisans, and have a correct insight

into the world, and conduct themselves with civility and moderation, and are therefore thought to do little harm; but they do as little good, because they have no fire or energy in them, they never go out of their way to remove the misery or vice which is at their doorsteps: so it may be with Churches. A Church which is liberal may be also indifferent; and having attained the form of truth, may have lost the power of it: and when all that I have described is accomplished, the Church which has accommodated the character of its belief to the wants of another age may still be sapless, lifeless, spiritless. It may be sunk in rationalism and indifferentism, and never lift a hand for the improvement of mankind. It will be free from many drawbacks; will it continue to have any mission or vocation? Will there be a religious revival, a greater sense of justice and truth, a greater care of the poor, a greater desire to elevate the masses corresponding to the progress of enlightenment? We can only conjecture: there seem to be signs that men are feeling more strongly than formerly the common needs of humanity, that they are more deeply sensible of their duty to one another; and from time to time they hear strange half-articulate voices speaking within them, and calling them out of the slums of vice and ignorance to acknowledge their Father and our Father, and their God and our God. The mind of the philosopher often seems to yearn for something more than he knows, and would fain receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child. Wherever there is zeal or energy for the improvement of mankind, there is an element of Christian life. Slowly these elements may again unite on the basis of a Christianity truer and deeper

than that which has satisfied former ages. The Church of the future will be what we make it: we must not theorize, we must live. In the present day we may easily desert the form of belief in which we have been brought up, but shall we have risen to anything higher? Will our characters become stronger and more harmonious? Will our lives be purer, holier, better? Shall we be more ready to bear the cross of Christ? Will the Church, to which we belong, be made by our efforts a more loving and faithful communion, more truly instinct with the spirit of Christ, more devoted to the good of men? That is a responsibility which presses on the coming generation, especially on those of us who feel that old things are passing away, and that we must help ourselves and other men to a new life.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 295–7.)

Tests of Religious Movements

When the love of God and Christ is diffused in the soul of a man, he finds it easier to get above himself, to live for others, to conquer his merely animal nature. And, though there may be a good deal of illusion accompanying such feelings, of which those who are subject to them should be aware, yet if we get rid of the illusion and fix the good, they may also be the beginnings of a higher life in us which will last when the revival has passed away. Such a movement passed over the Church of England in the first thirty years of this century, and has been succeeded, as you know, by another movement of a different and in some respects opposite character by another and another and another. We who are

now living can hardly judge of them impartially, because we are under the influence of them and we cannot know their future consequences. But what will posterity say of them? They will observe that, like other religious movements, they had their time of growth and decline, and that after they had passed away they left a state of exhaustion and perhaps of reaction. The same cannot repeat itself in the same form, but weaker and weaker. They would remark, probably, that much more in them than we are able to detect is really a survival of the past. They will judge them in that point of view from which they are least likely to judge of themselves—by a political and moral standard. Did they raise the tone of society? Did they increase mutual confidence? Did they diminish drinking? Did they find the people uneducated and leave them educated? Was the voice of their supporters lifted up in the cause of justice and humanity, when no party interest seemed to be at stake? Have they tended after all to elevate or to lower the moral sentiments of mankind, e.g. to increase the love of truth or the power of superstition and self-deception? Did they divide or unite the world? Did they leave the minds of men clearer and more enlightened, or did they add another element of confusion to the chaos? Did they, seeing the difficulties in which religious belief is temporarily involved, drive men back from reason and history to take refuge in the emotions? These are the principles by which they must be judged at the bar of history and before the judgement-seat of God. These are the tests which we must apply to them and to our own lives also. No final assurance or intensity of inward conviction can take

the place of them. However sure we may be, we cannot be sure that we are not mistaken unless our faith is indissolubly bound up with truth and right and the well-being of mankind.

(*College Sermons*, 122–3.)

Perversions of Religion

The change from religion and Divine right to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, though very real and important, is less important from some points of view than it appears. The best men, though they have different theories about the nature of human actions, and sometimes entertain the greatest dislike to one another, yet come round in practice to the same point. When the question is, What is honest? What is pure? What is true? What is disinterested? though the effect of these general speculations on the human mind may be very different, they will not be found to vary in the answer. For where the sense of duty is, religion is not far off. When men are serving their fellows they are serving God also. The protests against the introduction of religion into politics are really protests against the abuse of it. When religion became a craft, the most subtle of all crafts, and the priest stood behind the soldier, when men saw the best, i. e. the most religious of men, Bossuet and Massillon, defending the massacres and tortures of the Huguenots, can we wonder that they should have wished to banish a religion of which these were the fruits? Nor can we be surprised at the noblest minds revolting from religion, or at whole countries like Italy and France falling into a reaction against it, and not even now

recovering their equilibrium. But when we consider how deep and powerful an influence religion has exerted in all ages and countries we can hardly suppose that her power is exhausted, or that the aberration of human nature from itself is destined to be permanent. The day may be coming when a larger idea of Christianity, the true religion of Christ, may win back the hearts of those who have been repelled by the perversions and disfigurements of it. (*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 234–5.)

The Personal Element in Religion

* Men seem to find it easier to receive the Word of God from a person than from books and treatises on philosophy. We like better to be spoken to than to be read to; and the Epistle written in the lives of men is more striking than the Epistle written with pen and ink. Let us take the case of the poor, or of new converts in a strange country. The words which they hear are inseparably bound up with the persons by whom they are spoken. The greatest Christian teachers of later ages, such as Xavier or Schwartz, claimed nothing for themselves, and yet we can easily see that they embodied to their followers the truths which they taught. Their life, their manner, their look, inspired listening multitudes. And so of all ministers of Christ who are worthy of the name; they must not only teach certain doctrines to their congregations, but they must be like Christ in this also that they impart themselves; there must be something in them consistent with their words, yet more than their words, an unseen virtue or influence which goes out of

them, the influence of a loving heart and of a holy life which diffuses itself over the world.

So within our own experience we seem to find a parallel to the language of the New Testament which makes belief in the truth equivalent to belief in Christ, and knowledge of the truth equivalent to the knowledge of Christ. I may add one more illustration. The ancient philosophers, too, spoke of a wise man who was the type and exemplar of all goodness, about whom strange paradoxes were affirmed—that he was a king, that he might be happy on the rack, and the like. This was their mode of describing philosophy. But they never supposed that Socrates or Chrysippus, or any other great teacher, really fulfilled this ideal. They did not 'see with their eyes' or 'touch with their hands' the Word of Life. Nevertheless the Greek ideal, which is not confined to the Stoics, but is found to a certain extent in Aristotle and Plato, does throw a distant light on the relation of Christ to His disciples in the first ages. For it seems to show that in all ages mankind have been seeking for something more than ideas; they have wanted to have a person like themselves in whom they might see truth and goodness face to face. As in primitive times the gods were believed to have taken the likeness of men, they desired to see that higher conception of a Divine nature to which they had attained realized to them in the form of man.

(*Unpublished.*)

The Originality of Christianity

* The deeper thoughts of men's hearts, the higher standard of absolute moral purity, the spiritual life

which is hidden with Christ and God, the law of sacrifice by which men are taught that they should take up the cross in the service of their brethren, the blessedness of poverty, the hope of immortality —these are not to be found in the writings of philosophers. (*Unpublished.*)

'The Phases of Faith'

The author of *The Phases of Faith* was one who might be described as accidentally a freethinker, but in reality a follower of Christ; or, in the deeper and also more familiar language of the Gospel, as one 'who was not far from the kingdom of heaven.' The first impression given by the book is, How good and simple this man was! and yet how easily affected by all the influences of the age in which he lived! And there have been others like him both in this and the last generation—freethinkers who have in their nature the humility and self-devotion of a Catholic saint—Catholics who could never lose the sincere love of every form of truth. It is a curious reflection also that such persons may sometimes have crossed each other in the path of life, and by some reaction of nature have either of them ended where the other began.

These are some of the paradoxes of an age of transition, such as the last half century, which has had such curious effects on the relation of things secular and spiritual, on the characters and opinions of men. The next generation too will be put upon its trial; but the trial will be of a different kind. Many questions which greatly affected us will to them be familiar or obsolete. They will no longer

be inquiring into the origin or date of the books of Scripture, or discussing the evidence of miracles, or seeking to reconcile science and religion or morality and theology. Critical and historical questions will have been settled with that degree of relative certainty which is attainable in such subjects. The relation of religion to science will have solved itself, and will be no longer a matter of dispute. An historical age will have succeeded to a controversial one. Religious life will no longer be liable to be upset by small earthquakes, but will have a wider and deeper foundation. Good men of all parties will more and more see that so far as they had the spirit of God at all, they meant the same thing far more than they supposed. They will see that other religions and other teachers of religion had in them also the spirit of Christ; and that these anticipations of the truth, instead of impairing the force of Christianity, strengthen and extend it; as Christ also Himself seems to intimate when He says, 'Many shall come from the East and from the West;' or again, 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.' They will recognize that what has been sometimes regarded as the triumph of antichrist is only the natural consequence of criticism and science, which, like the rising of the tide, can by no human efforts be driven back.

(*College Sermons*, 310–1.)

A New Reformation

These are a few of the signs of greater harmony prevailing the world, and of the spirit of Christ being more diffused among men. They may lead

some of us to think of a new epoch in the history of Christianity, bearing the same relation to the Christianity of the three last centuries which the Reformation did to the ages which preceded.

Whether this be too bold a speculation or not, we may be assured of this, that there never will be a millennium on earth until we make one. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, is not evident by a sign from the heavens, or special providences vouchsafed to individuals, is not seen in the union of churches, or in the declarations of councils. The sun will rise as at any other time; the seasons will come and go; the generations of men will be born and die as in every other period of human history. The difference will not be in the external appearance of nature, but in the renewal of the spirit of man. Christ will appear to us not in the extraordinary, but in the common, in the dwellings of the poor, in the daily life of the family, in the integrity of trade, in the peace of nations. The increase of justice and truth, of knowledge and love, the diminution of suffering and disease, of ignorance and crime, the living for others and not for themselves, to do the will of God more and more, and not their own will, these are the only real signs in individuals or in nations that the kingdom of God has come among them.

(*College Sermons*, 76–7.)

The Will of God as the Law of Life

Every man, or almost every man, has in him a principle of right and truth far above his own practice and that of his fellow men; but few of us make this better self the law of our lives.

He who will not allow his mind to be lowered to the standard of those around him; who retains his sense of right and wrong unimpaired amid all temptation; who asks himself, in all his actions, not what men will say of him, but what is the will of God—he may be truly said to bear in his life and character the Divine Image for our example. He may be some one who has sacrificed his earthly interests for the love of truth; or who, with the world against him, has been compelled by a natural nobility of disposition to fight the battle of the alien and oppressed; or he may be one who, not knowing God, has sought to live in the ideal, that is, in His Image, above the commonplaces of the world, whether Christian or unchristian. All men are telling him, 'This is politic, this is expedient, this is what your party requires, this is what the Church or the world approves, this is the way to honour and preferment; these are the fashions of society, the customs of traders, the demands of nature, the received opinions of men, the necessities of the situation.' But he with unaverted eye thinks only of the good and true, having 'a faith and peace which no storm can shake'; and in all his life sees, like the prophet, the vision of God and his duty, high and lifted up above the mists of human error and the dark clouds of passion and prejudice, 'having the body of heaven in his clearness.'

This is a height of perfection to which a very few attain, and which will seem to some persons almost to have passed away from this earth. When our will is lost in His will, and our thought in His thought, and no earthly wish intrudes or offends, then, indeed, we may be said to be one with God,

and God with us. And, even although this perfect image of God can hardly be formed in most of us, it is good for us to have such thoughts when receiving the Communion of the Lord's Supper, at our prayers, and at other times. For there can never be any danger of our loving God too much, if we only think of Him as the God of justice and truth: if we seek to know Him first, and understand that all human knowledge is a manifestation of Him, there can be no fear of our becoming mystics.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 149–51.)

Diminution of Differences between the Churches

When, applying the words of Christ to our own times, we say, 'The hour is coming, and now is, when there shall be neither Catholics nor Protestants, Churchmen nor Dissenters,' we do not suppose that these well-known names will cease among us, or that the things signified by them will altogether disappear. But they may become unimportant in comparison with the great truth 'God is a Spirit.' For the more the spiritual character of religion is understood, the more external differences will disappear. Can we think of a good man as other than a good man because he belongs to another sect, because he does not believe in the same doctrines which we believe in? Hardly, if we know him; but ignorance is the parent of dislike and estrangement. When we read history we see that these differences have originated in feelings which we no longer share, and which are maintained chiefly by external barriers. And, when we turn from the

ecclesiastical history of our own country and of Europe to the larger book of the religions of the world, we perceive that the disputes which have occasioned them are infinitely small in comparison with the greater interests of religion, and we wonder how the human mind can have been absorbed by them. Or again, when we look out on 'the heavens, the work of Thy hands, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained,' are not these religious disputes calmed and silenced in the thought, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him?' And when we think of God as a Spirit, must not this great truth absorb the lesser antagonisms or parties which divide us? Just as in politics we have seen towns or districts of the same country which seemed to bear an external enmity to one another, the heritage of former ages, yet contrary to all expectations have been fused or moulded into a single nation and become instinct with a common life. There is Italy, for example, and Germany. And are the divisions of churches to be more lasting than the divisions of nations?

These may seem to be unsettling thoughts, and I ventured to speak of the text as one of the revolutionary sayings of Christ. For we must provide for the religion of the next generation as well as of this, for our whole lives and not merely for the phase of opinion which prevails at the present moment. It is certainly an unsettling thing to try to live in another world as well as this, to want to fly when we are compelled to walk upon the earth. Yet most of the good which has been accomplished among men is due to aspirations of this sort. We may be in the world and not of it, and we may

be in the Church and far from agreeing in the temper and spirit of many Churchmen. Difficulties may surround our path to some extent. But, if there is no difficulty in ourselves, these may generally be overcome by common prudence. The aspirations after a higher state of life than that in which we live may in a measure fulfil themselves. We may create that which we seek after. And although there will always remain something more to be done, and our thoughts will easily outrun our utmost exertions, yet we may find in such thoughts of the changes which may come over the world and the Church not an unquiet or disturbing element of our lives but a sense of repose; they may enable us to see whither we are going, and we may have a satisfaction in contributing to the work which God intended us to do.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 187–9.)

The Church of England as it is

Shall we imagine ourselves ascending in thought to the top of some hills: the hills near London, the Surrey or Berkshire hills, or any other pleasant eminence with which we are familiar, and survey the wide prospect which lies beneath? On every side, at two or three miles' distance from one another, we see churches standing out in the plain or peeping through the trees; some newly built of white stone, others weather-beaten by the storms of ages; some of which—perhaps the greater number—may date back to the twelfth century or even earlier, others in the latest style of revived Gothic architecture. Around them the 'rude forefathers

of the hamlet sleep,' their names almost lost in the grass of the churchyard, and preserved for about a century, rarely for more. Near to the church is the house of the clergyman, generally small and unpretending, yet bearing even in its outward aspect the stamp of some refinement and education. If we enter the church we find in most parts of the country that it has been newly restored; it looks like a building which some persons loved, and in which they took a pride. The excrescences which have been added during the last three centuries are removed; the stained windows are beginning to reappear; the invidious distinctions of pews no longer mar the symmetry of the building, or interfere with the amity of the congregation. When we have looked around us, and have seen the inside as well as the outside of some of the churches which lie in the surrounding country, let us remember that there is nothing like this to be seen except in a Christian land, and nothing in every respect comparable except in England.

Or let us go into the monotonous and dingy streets of one of our great manufacturing towns, in which the rows of factory buildings and their chimneys tower above the lowly dwellings of the working-man. In those hives of industry there is not much upon which the eye can rest with pleasure. They cannot be described as 'fair places which are the joy of the whole earth'; they are full of noise and smoke and steam. Yet in the midst of them the old abbey, or the parish church, or the newly-built spire still preserves the recollection of a higher interest. They are probably the objects to which the stranger most naturally turns for relief. They

seem to say that in the world of money-making there are some persons whose relation to their fellow men is not of a purely commercial or material kind; who endure a comparatively hard lot in life for the good of others; who are educated themselves, and devote their lives to the education of the poor and their children; who are their best friends in sorrow and suffering, and who do not forsake them in death.

The churches which we see in town or country are the symbols of that great organization which is spread throughout the country for the promotion of morality and religion. We must not expect that all its ministers will be wise, or learned, or holy: they are men like ourselves, raised somewhat above the standard of their fellows by their clerical profession. The clergyman's life is the standard and example of good manners, as well as morals, to the inhabitants of the district. More or less, as a fact, he does care for the welfare of his neighbours: the oppressed can go to him with their tale; the friendless can claim his aid, and often be set in the way of making a honest livelihood. In the country he is the poor squire or gentleman, who shows how a house may be refined without luxury; how on slender means a family may be educated and brought up (not without effort) in their own condition of life. In the town he is busily occupied fighting a battle against vice and immorality, building schools, forming societies, striving to improve the dwellings of the poor, or to erect the additional church which is so much needed; speaking to men week by week about temperance, honesty, and judgement to come.

So I have endeavoured to set before you without

exaggeration the Church of England as it is. It may be said that the clergy are prejudiced; and so they are—and so are all men who are bound together by any corporate or party tie: as I said before, we must not expect to find in large bodies of men the standard of freedom or of intelligence which is attainable by a few individuals. Then, again, their sermons are criticized; they often seem to be too far removed from ordinary life, and to make little or no impression on the hearer. But the fault is partly in ourselves for listening to them with rebellious ears, and for expecting in the many the rare gifts which are found only in the few. Do we consider what would be the effect of having no word of moral and religious teaching over the whole country from one year to the other—especially among the poor, who are so dependent on the half-understood words of their clergyman for any spiritual or intellectual life? Again, it will be said that many clergymen are slothful and ignorant, and seekers after preferment—so are individuals in all classes. And yet admitting these and many other defects to be truly charged against the clergy of the Church of England—that is, against ourselves: without boasting and self-glorification we may be thankful to God who has preserved us this ancient house of our fathers, with all its faults the best and most tolerant of the Churches of Christendom, and the least opposed to the spirit of the age.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 289–92.)

Individual Life and Institutions

The truth is that men are apt to look (1) in edifices of wood and stone, (2) in great and ancient

institutions, for that perfection which, if it can be found at all on earth, is to be sought in the lives of individuals. The true temple of God is the heart of man, and there the image of Christ may be renewed again and again, and effaced again and again. Neither is there any limit to the perfection which is attainable by any one of us, for Christ says: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But there is a limit to the perfection of outward institutions. These seem to be at their best when the goodness or genius of some one or two men has inspired them: the monastic orders, when reformed by such a man as St. Bernard; the mediaeval Church, when governed by such great prelates as Anselm or Grosteste. All institutions flourish when they are ordered by men who have great aims, who understand their true character; and know how to derive a strength from them, and to impart a strength of their own to them. They are not mere abstractions, but communities of living beings; and a common spirit or soul animates them. And sometimes they fall into corruption and decay; their schools and churches are unroofed, their very stones are carted away, and there is nothing to indicate the place where they once stood. And sometimes they remain vacant, tenantless, to another generation; unmeaning, but waiting for some one to take possession of them. The building which once resounded with the voice of the choir may be turned to some other, secular, use, as has often been the case on the continent of Europe; or, as in our own country, a new and reformed Christianity may take up its abode in them, while we regret that so many of

them have been destroyed by the zeal or by the neglect of our fathers.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 285–6.)

The Invisible Church

Yet higher and more ideal than any outward or visible Church is the invisible, of which our conception is more abstract and distant, and therefore more vacant and shadowy. It is described in the words of the Bidding Prayer as 'the congregation of faithful men dispersed throughout the world.' But who they are no eye of man can discern! For the wheat and the tares grow together in this world, and many are called but few are chosen, and many are hearers but not doers of the word, and the first shall be last and the last first; and there are other sheep not of this fold, and there are those who have not seen and yet have believed. There are nominal Christians who are in no sense real Christians; and, on the other hand, in distant lands there are those to whom Christ in His individual person was never known, who, nevertheless, have had the temper of Christ, and in a way of their own have followed Him: all these are included in the invisible Church. It is a great fellowship of those who have lived for others and not for themselves, for the truth and not for the opinion of men only, above the world and not merely in it. It is a communion of souls and of good men everywhere and in all ages, who, if they could have known one another and the Lord, would have acknowledged that they were animated with a common spirit, and would have loved and delighted in one another. And we, too, feel that in the

thought of this there is comfort and strength; we rejoice in the consciousness that here in this congregation, and everywhere to the furthest limits of the world, there are those who stand in the same relation towards God which, as we hope, it may be granted to us to attain; and that, as many have gone before, many are coming after to work out His will in this life and in another.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 35–6.)

Looking Forward

Of the future we hardly know anything else, but that it will be unlike the present. We ourselves shall change with it; if any one here is living half a century hence it will be in a changed world. How changed that inner world of thoughts and feelings, when at the best resignation will have taken the place of life and hope, and the scene in which he lives be folding up before him like a vesture, and whether in hope or faith or despair he will himself begin to feel that he has nothing more to do with these things. And how all his family relations may have changed, I need hardly mention, and how the course of the great world itself, with its struggles for empire, and prejudices and passions may have changed, in which each one here present is as nothing and insignificant, I may say, except in the sight of God only. Of what we ourselves shall be fifty years hence we can scarcely form a more distinct idea than of what another will be, so dimly can we see through the clouds which cover us. (*College Sermons*, 3.)

IX

RELIGIOUS PERSONALITIES

Death as the Revealer of a Man's Life

THE light of death gives us a true conception of many things which we are unable to attain at other times. It takes us out of conventions, prejudices, enmities; it lifts us into a higher region. It makes us see our friends and ourselves more truly. The bitterness of party spirit is hushed over the grave. We can hardly imagine how we ever came to entertain a feeling of jealousy or dislike towards one who is gone. We may regret that we did not understand or appreciate him better; or that through some fancy or pride we did not do more for him, or see more of him—that we were too much estranged from him by distance or by indolence. There were so many things which we should like to have said to him; so much about which we should have liked to hear him speak. But the time for speaking is past; he can speak to us now only by his example. There may be some forgiveness, too, which we should have wished to ask. Well, our minds may be at rest about that; for it was granted before it was asked. We seem certainly to know him now as we never knew him before, and to value him more

dearly. The circumstances of his life return upon us—the first time when we made his acquaintance; how he looked upon some memorable occasion; the remarkable things which he said; his disinterested actions, and the like—and we supplement our recollections by those of others, and are perhaps surprised to find that he said things to them which he did not say to us, and that though we were intimate friends, yet that there was a side of his character which he never showed to us. For men are drawn out differently by different persons: we speak on one subject to one, on another to another; we look to one for sympathy, and to another for light and strength, so that the whole character of any man is hardly ever known to any single acquaintance. Some portion remains a mystery even to his dearest friend.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 210–1.)

The Teacher and his Disciples

The memories which have lasted longest in this world are those of men who have imparted, whether by speaking or writing, new ideas to mankind, or who have founded new institutions: and these two are the complement of each other. The spoken word is but an animating breath which passes away and is gone; the written word too is fleeting, and requires to be embodied in a system and to have a place assigned to it in human thought. And how can the teacher diffuse his new ideas unless he gather around him a band of disciples? and how can the disciples continue after he is withdrawn from them, unless they have a local habitation and are formed

into a society? There is the life of Christ and the Christian Church, and in these two all Christianity and all theology is contained. They are the most general and also the most scientific divisions of the subject which can be framed. They may be regarded as the very types of Christian and of other societies. There is the life of the man within and without the system, the school, the college, the institution, the building which he has created for himself. The one may be called in a figure, the house made with hands, the other the house not made with hands. And we find by experience that the outer investiture or environment never exactly expresses the inner life or idea; it limits, it cramps, it perverts it; it sometimes even turns it into its opposite. Such has been the history of all churches, of all monastic orders, of all schools and colleges at some time in their existence. They have begun in poverty, they have ended in wealth; they have begun in industry, they have ended in sloth; they have begun in love, they have degenerated into hate; they have begun with the intention of promoting religion and education, and they have ended by being an incubus on them. They have been adapted to the age which gave them birth; they have continued when they were only doing harm. And then if the idea of their founders was true and pure, we can sometimes appeal from their works to them: and breathe a new life from time to time into the institutions which are called by their names. When wearied with superstitious rites and ceremonies, we can return to the simple teaching of Christ, from the Church to the Gospel. And there have been other great teachers (though we do not place them

on a level with Him), who have been better than their followers, to whose life and works posterity may appeal against the traditions and practices which have grown up under their authority.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 21–2.)

Loyola and his Followers

When Ignatius in the sixty-fifth year of his age, burnt up, as his biographer describes, with the desire of seeing God and being with Christ, left the care of earthly things, he could point to seventeen provinces administered by him, to 104 colleges established in his lifetime, to the face of Europe changed by him. No thought of this earthly greatness appears for a moment to have touched him at any time in his life. But if he could have extended his vision rather more than two centuries, and have seen the result of which I have been just speaking, would he have acknowledged that there was some fatal flaw in the original idea which had given birth to these vast institutions? Or would he simply have regarded the ruin of his followers as an evil which God had permitted, perhaps, for his and their sins, and have looked forward to a time, never to arrive, in which they should be reinstated among the great cities of Europe, with still greater power and glory than before?

In the silence of the grave there is no answer to this question. But we may still ask it for our own instruction, and obtain such answer as we can. In what lay the power and where was the flaw of this great system? We may consider this question first in reference to the means employed: secondly as to

the principle or end which Ignatius and his followers proposed to themselves.

And first as to the means employed. Willing to devote themselves wholly to the service of God and of the Order, the Jesuits, under the guidance of Ignatius, were taught to make of themselves instruments perfectly adapted to the work. They were to let those qualities grow in them which made them good members of the Order, and to eradicate those which had the opposite tendency. No teachers ever impressed on themselves and others the lesson of self-control like the first Jesuits. They seem first of all men to have made a study of the human mind with a view to education. Man was not to live by fasting alone, but by action, by obedience, by bringing every thought and word into harmony with one aim. He was to pass his days in meditation according to a prescribed course, but his meditations were to bring forth fruits day by day. He was to combat his faults, not altogether but one by one; to fight, not against some general conception of sin, but against definite recurring sins which he was in the habit of committing. He was to bring before his mind all the associations of sense which could assist him in mounting upward. In the little book called *Spiritual Exercises*, which Ignatius partly wrote and partly compiled for the use of his disciples, he is inexhaustible. The exercises are framed so as to employ four weeks, and every day at the commencement of them the novice is desired to place himself in the midst of some sacred scene, such as the house in which Christ lived, or the village through which He passed, the temple in which He preached, the garden in which His agony was accomplished. On

another day the mind is to transport itself into the highest heaven and to behold the Three Persons sitting in council; beneath them is lying the whole earth, with its peoples, black, white, in war and at peace, laughing, weeping, living, dying, in sickness or health, or some other condition of being. Or the believer is to envisage to himself the two camps of Jerusalem and Babylon, and mankind ranged under the two banners of Lucifer and Christ. These are to be the environments of his thoughts—called by Ignatius *praeludia*—and they are to be accompanied by one distinct motive such as hope, fear, love, which is to occupy the whole exercise. The mode of humility, for example, is as follows:—First, the disciple is to offer himself to God in all his actions; secondly, he is to place before himself the goods and ills of life, and pray that he may never in seeking the one or avoiding the other fall from his resolution. Once more he is to place before himself the goods and ills of life, and deliberately to choose the latter.

We see how such a discipline was designed to bow the whole spirit and mind of a man into obedience to the supposed will of God or his fellow men. We see how from being a natural he would become an artificial man, how he would lose the moral in the religious sense, how instead of walking and standing, he would crawl and wind in and out of impossible places. The Jesuits were not wrong in seeking to understand human nature before they acted upon it; or in their efforts after self-improvement which were based on a sort of scientific principle. The gentler methods which they introduced into education have been of great value to the world. But they were wrong in attempting to destroy independence, to

stamp out character, to extinguish life. They did not see that a human creature, to whom God had given reason, could not be 'perinde ac cadaver' in the hands of his superiors without sinking below the level of humanity. Their means were to a certain extent good, and may be studied by us with advantage. But they were carried too far; and their discipline became a death not only to the intellectual but to the moral nature of man.

Yet before we part from the first founders of the Company of Jesus, while tracing the fatal consequences of their mission, we must acknowledge that there are no men now living in any branch of the Christian Church so devoted as they were to a great religious work, so careless of self and of their own lives, so regardless of the bubble reputation or of the more solid advantages of great preferments. If we think of them as engaged in doubtful conspiracies against the lives and governments of Protestant princes, we must also think of them as dying of hunger and thirst among the Indians, unknown men, cheered only by the thought of Christ and the love of God in the wilderness of this world. A great deal too we may learn from their methods. We cannot say that men should not fix their minds on high aims (never was the world or this country more in need of such); or that they should not, instead of resting in vague ideas, seek to reduce their aims at once to practice; or that they will not find in prayer and devotion a powerful stimulus and support to them amid the difficulties of their task; or that in learning to pray and hold communion with the unseen we should take no account of the laws of the human mind. Nor can we say

that the Jesuit Fathers were intentionally corruptors of morality. They sought rather to bring back in the courts of Popes and Princes an impossible strictness: by the help of casuistry they made a compromise with human nature, and so the letter got the better of the spirit, the means of the end.

And this leads me in conclusion to speak of the great error of Jesuitism as conceived by its founder, an error which, though not on that grand scale or attended with such terrible and far-reaching consequences, has to be guarded against by every Christian teacher in our own as well as in other ages. It is the separation of religion from morality and truth. There is no trace in any Jesuit author of the love of truth for its own sake, though some of them are brought round by the windings of dialectics to admit the Protestant doctrine of freedom of conscience. And this, perhaps, is the explanation in part of the phenomenon which I have already noticed that, able and educated as they were, not one of them ever rose to any great distinction in literature. They never thought of God as the God of truth, but only as the God of the Church, who had entrusted to them the tradition of the Church. Truth, or the pretence of truth, was to them only a means by which they sought to govern mankind in the interests of Catholicism, which they believed also to be those of Europe and of the human race.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 34–9.)

Pascal's Theory and Practice of Religion

We must acknowledge that both his [Pascal's] theory and practice of religion have a taint of

exaggeration, and that his passionate love of truth, though never losing sight of an ethical principle, is limited by the Roman Catholic faith. We do not take him as a guide either in philosophy or in theology. We do not think of his opinions so much as of himself. For his was one of those illuminating lives which cast a radiance far and wide over the path of humanity. It is the clearness and penetration of his intellect, not the consecutiveness or consistency of his system, that we admire and seek to imitate. No man ever freed himself more completely from the conventionalities of religion. No man ever combined such strong and simple faith with such a profound knowledge of human nature. No man ever suffered and at the same time did so much. In no one were such intellectual gifts united with such moral graces. The literary man in modern times has been too often jealous and sensitive; he has despised and hated his fellow men, with the exception of that section of them who worshipped at his shrine; he has claimed a kind of superiority to moral laws; strong in words, but weak and egotistical in character, he has drawn after him followers, who in his weakness have found the expression of their own. There have even been good men who have never been able to get rid of vanity and conceit. What a contrast to them is presented by this man, of whose life self-control is the law; who is utterly indifferent to literary fame; who writes only as a duty which he owes to God and to his fellow creatures! Again, in this world of selfishness and self-seeking, in which most of us place before ourselves wealth or honour, or high position in the State, or preferment

in the Church, as one of the strongest, if not the only motive by which life is to be actuated, how great a thing it is to have one man recalling us to the image of Christ, to simplicity, to disinterestedness, to truth, which we might all follow if we would! Or, in this strife about classes, which seems so threatening in our own day, is it not striking to turn to the example of one in whom the feeling of caste or of class was altogether dead; who, like Christ, neither assailing nor yet defending the rights of property, identified himself altogether with the poor, whose sufferings quickened in him, not the sense of his own misery, but of the misery of others; in whom what he calls the 'moi' of humanity is annihilated and lost in the thought of God and his fellow men? Or, again, when we think of professing Christians hardly ever realizing the words which they use, ready almost to fight about doctrines which have ceased to have any meaning to them, how singular it is to meet with a man whose language is the very expression of the thought in which he daily lived. He, like any other man, may be criticized: you may point out, as I have been doing to-day, the inequality of his genius, or the fragmentary character of his writings. Tried by the standard of metaphysics or of political philosophy, he may fall short of the requirements of system-makers. Yet among the sons of men you will hardly find one who had a greater insight into man and nature, in whom faith and life were more completely one, or who more truly bore the likeness of Christ.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 105–7.)

The Spirit of Religious Leaders

It seems to me that before we can understand such characters, or do them any justice, or gather any lesson from them, we must learn to separate the essential from the accidental in them. Their use of Scripture, their technical theology, their visions and revelations, belong for the most part to their age and country, or to their early bringing up. But that which is essential, or (if I may use the expression) eternal, in them, that which is to be found in Catholic, as well as Puritan, in St. Theresa, Madame Guion, or St. Francis Xavier, as well as in John Bunyan and George Fox, is their absolute devotion to the will of God: their entire single-mindedness, their perfect disinterestedness, their willingness to spend and be spent in their Master's service, which will make many in the present day ready to cry out, 'Oh, for a spirit like theirs!' I am not saying that any of them supply the perfect type of the Christian character, but they supply elements which are greatly wanting among us. For, in the present day, when so many comparisons are made of things that were formerly separated, now that Protestants are beginning to think more kindly of Catholics, and Catholics of Protestants, and the different religions of men are beginning to know one another, and to recognize the common human element as well as the higher purpose of them, it seems to be of great importance that we should bring together good and truth in all things, not limited only by our own narrow circle. If, instead of reverting to the follies of the past, we could really extract the wisdom of the past, a new prospect of Christian progress would open to us,

and the Gospel might really be before the age. If, instead of returning to antiquated practices and disused symbols, the higher purpose of the eleventh century were capable of being translated into the language and customs of the nineteenth; then, perhaps, a truer ideal of religion and nobler forms of life might spring up among us. Or if the spirit of the Reformers and of the great scholars of the Reformation could be re-awakened in this and other European countries, the ruinous barriers which divide the Christian world might fall down, and an intelligent study of Scripture again become the bond and centre of Christians. But in religion we are always returning to the past, instead of starting from the past; learning nothing, forgetting nothing; trying to force back modern thought into the old conditions instead of breathing anew the spirit of Christ into an altered world. (*Biographical Sermons*, 51–3.)

Religion and the Lord's Supper

It is with strange and mixed feelings that we read such books as the *Life of St. Bernard*, or *St. Theresa*, or the meditations on the Sacrament in the fourth book of the *Imitation of Christ*. For, although we know that to ourselves individually, and still more to the world at large, goodness is a very dear bargain when purchased at the expense of truth, yet we see something in the lives and thoughts of these men and women which we would gladly transfer to our own lives, and for which, in this degenerate age, we vainly seem to look; and to them the very spirit and essence of religion was felt to be concentrated in the Eucharist. From the act of partaking of

the bread and wine the rest of their spiritual life appeared to flow; they were full of rapture and fear, of sorrow and joy, at the same instant; they saw and heard things of which they could hardly speak to others, seeming to lose the sense of mortality in the immediate presence of Christ. This was the food of men leading a superhuman life, taking no thought of this world or of themselves, but caring only for the good of other men, and for the service of Christ. There is a great deal for us to sympathize with and to reverence in this; and, although we feel that no good, or rather great evil, would arise from the attempt to revive the feelings of the fourth, or the eleventh, or the thirteenth century in the nineteenth, yet we shall do well also to separate these ideals of Christian life, these higher types of character and feeling, from the accidents which accompanied them, or the fantastic thoughts in which they clothed themselves. Men are apt to think that they cannot have too much of a good thing, too much piety, too much religious feeling, too much attendance at the public worship of God. They forget the truth which the old philosophy taught, that the life of man should be a harmony; not absorbed in any one thought, even of God, or in any one duty or affection, but growing up as a whole to the fullness of the perfect man. That is a maimed soul which loves goodness and has no love of truth, or which loves truth and has no love of goodness. The cultivation of one part of religion to the exclusion of another seems often to exact a terrible retribution both in individual characters and in churches. There is a nemesis of believing all things, or indeed of any degree of intellectual

dishonesty, which sometimes ends in despair of all truth; there is an ecstasy of religious devotion which has not unfrequently degenerated into licentiousness. And in the same city, and in the same church in which the streaming eyes of saints have been uplifted to the image of Christ hanging over the altar, there have been 'acts of faith' of another kind, which are not obscurely connected with these ardours of Divine love, in which the voice of pity and of every other human feeling is silenced.

(*Sermons on Faith and Doctrine*, 306–7.)

An Old Man's Retrospect

Now on the threshold of old age, he may be supposed to take a look backward over the sixty or seventy years which have passed, not in the great world, but within the limits of his own home. His religion is not derived from books, but comes to him from his experience of life.

First he has a deep sense of thankfulness to God for all His mercies. He may have had troubles and disappointments in life, but he acknowledges that all things have been ordered for the best. The days pass more quickly with him now than formerly and make less impression on him. He will soon be crossing the bar and going forth upon the ocean. He is not afraid of death, it seems natural to him; he is soon about to pass into the hands of God. He has many thoughts about the past which he does not communicate to others—about some persons in whom he has had a peculiar interest, about places in which he has lived, about words spoken to him in his youth which have strangely imprinted them-

selves on his mind, about many things which no one living but himself can remember. He wonders how he ever escaped from the temptations of youth, and is sometimes inclined to think that the Providence which watches over children and drunken people must have had a special care of him. He may have been guilty too of some meannesses or sins which are concealed from his fellow men; he is thankful that they are known to God only. He is not greatly troubled at the remembrance of them, if he have been delivered from them, but much more at the unprofitableness of his whole life.

Before he departs he has some things to say to his children or to his friends. He will tell them that he now sees this world in different proportions, and that what was once greatly valued by him now seems no longer of importance. The dreams of love and of ambition have fled away; he is no longer under the dominion of the hour. The disappointments which he has undergone no more affect him; he is inclined to think that they may have been for his good. He sees many things in his life which might have been better; opportunities lost which could never afterwards be by him recovered. He might have been wiser about health, or the education of his children, or his choice of friends, or the management of his business. He would like to warn younger persons against some of the mistakes which he had himself made. He would tell them that no man in later life rejoiced in the remembrance of a quarrel; and that the trifles of life, good temper, a gracious manner, trifles as they are thought, are among the most important elements of success. Above all he would exhort them to get rid of selfish-

ness and self-conceit, which are the two greatest sources of human evil.

There are some reflections which would often occur to his own mind though he might not speak of them to others. A sharp thrill of pain might sometimes pierce his heart when he remembered any irremediable wrong of which he had been the author, or when he recalled any unkind word to a parent which he had hastily uttered, or any dishonourable conduct of which he had been guilty. He need not disclose his fault to men, but neither will he disguise it from himself; least of all, if he have repented of the sin and is no longer the servant of it, should his conscience be overpowered by the remembrance of it. For sin too, like sorrow, is healed by time; and he who is really delivered from its bondage need not fear lest God should create it anew in him that He may inflict punishment upon him. For in the sight of God we are what we are, not what we have been at some particular moment; nor yet what we are in some detail or in reference to some particular act, but what we are on the whole.

Once more, when a man is drawing towards the end, he will be apt to think of the blessings of friendship and of family life. He has done so little for others and received so much from them. The old days of his childhood come back to him: the memory of his father and mother and brothers and sisters, all in the house together, and the lessons and the games and the birthday feasts and rejoicings as in a picture crowd upon his thoughts. When we have grown old they are most of them taken before us; no one else can ever fill their place in our lives.

Also there have been friends who have been like brothers and sisters to us; many of these, too, are gone and cannot be replaced. They have sympathized with our trials; they have inspired us with higher thoughts; they have spoken words which have been for ever imprinted on our mind. They have taken trouble to do us good—sometimes a remark of one of them thrown out as if by accident, or a letter written at a critical time, may have saved us from a fatal mistake. They have cared for our interests more than for their own, they would have died for us. Such experiences of disinterested friendship many men have had; and we reflect upon them more as we are left more alone, and the world is withdrawing from us. Living or dead, the true friend can never be forgotten by faithful and loyal hearts. And as the days become fewer, we think more of them as they once were in life—as they are now with God, where we, too, soon shall be.

Yet once more, we may suppose the statesman, who is within a measurable distance of the end,

> 'When the hurlyburly's done,
> When the battle's lost and won,'

to make similar reflections on his own political life. Perhaps he will say in the words of one who ten years ago was so familiar a figure among us: 'In the past there are many things I condemn, many things that I deplore, but a man's life must be taken as a whole.' He will not look back to party triumphs or great displays of oratory with the satisfaction which he once felt in them. He will acknowledge that he has made endless mistakes, and will sometimes wish that he had been more independent of

popular opinion. He has done little compared with what he once hoped to do. He will value most that part of his work which tended to promote justice, or to save life or to increase health, or to diffuse education, or to establish the foundation of peace between nations and classes. And in the words of one of the greatest of English statesmen, he will be glad to be remembered with expressions of goodwill in the abode of those whose lot it is to labour and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow.

Lastly, we may extend the spirit of the reflections of Richard Baxter to the religious difficulties of our own day. We may imagine an aged man who has lived through the last fifty or sixty years, and has been watching the movements which have agitated the Church from extreme to extreme and back again, each tendency seeming to have as great or even a greater reaction. He would see, as Baxter saw in his old age, that all other things come to an end, but that of the love of God and man there is no end. He would not raise questions about the rites of the Church, or the canonicity of the books of Scripture: these belong to criticism and ecclesiastical history, not to the spiritual life. He would seek for the permanent and essential only in the books of Scripture, in the lives of good men, in the religion of the world. To follow Christ, to speak the truth in love, to do to others as you would they should do to you, these are the eternal elements of religion which can never pass away, and he who lives in these lives in God.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 80–5.)

Charles Dickens

He whose loss we now mourn occupied a greater space than any other writer in the minds of Englishmen during the last thirty-five years. We read him, talked about him, acted him; we laughed with him, we were roused by him to a consciousness of the misery of others, and to a pathetic interest in human life. The workhouse child, the cripple, the half-clothed and half-starved inhabitant of a debtor's prison, found a way to his heart; and through the creations of his genius touch our hearts also. Works of fiction would be intolerable if they attempted, like sermons, directly to instruct us, but indirectly they are great instructors of the world; and we can hardly calculate the debt of gratitude which is due to a writer who has led us through our better feelings to sympathize with the good, the true, the sincere, the honest English character of ordinary life; and he has done us no harm in laughing at the egotism, the hypocrisy, the false respectability of religious professors and others. To another great humourist, who lies in this church, the words have been applied, that 'the gaiety of nations has been eclipsed by his death.' But of him who has been recently taken I would rather say in humble language that no one was ever so much beloved or so much mourned. There is no house in which books are read which did not receive a shock when it became known ten days ago that he, over whose pages we had pored with such thrilling interest, was no longer amongst us. Men seemed to have lost, not a great writer only, but one whom they had personally known; who was the friend of them and of their families.

And so we bid him 'farewell' once more, and return to our daily occupations. He has passed into the state of being in which, we may believe, human souls are drawn to one another by nearer ties, and the envious lines of demarcation which separate them here are broken down. And, if we could conceive that other world, we might perhaps imagine him still at home, rejoicing to have a place at that banquet to which the poor and the friendless, the halt and the lame, are specially invited. 'The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master;' 'there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor;' 'there the weary are at rest.'

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 274–5.)

A Liberal Clergyman

It has been said both of him [Stanley] and of others, that a liberal clergyman has no true place in the Church of England, that he subscribes what he does not believe, that he repeats words in a sense which they do not mean. I think he would have admitted that liberal clergymen are in a position of difficulty, and that many changes are needed in the Church of England before it can be adapted to them, or adapted to the wants of the laity. And he himself would often lament the indifference which the laity themselves showed to the great question whether the Church of England could continue to be maintained as the Church of the English nation, or whether (as in other European countries) Church and State, the secular and religious elements, should be allowed to drift into a condition of hopeless

antagonism. To the question which I just now raised, whether a person of what are termed liberal opinions can subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, I think that the best answer is given in the striking words of the Dean of Westminster himself, 'that if subscription is strictly enforced, then every one, from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the humblest clergyman in the wilds of Cumberland, must leave the Church. For the difficulty is not one which presses upon one party only, but almost equally upon all.' On the other hand there are weighty considerations, which may induce men of a liberal cast of mind to take Orders in the present day: firstly, the greater need of them than ever before: secondly, the evil of giving up a noble profession, for which a man is naturally fitted, on somewhat doubtful and casuistical grounds: thirdly, the weakness of isolation in good works; for a man who lives apart from the Church of England will probably live apart from every other religious society: fourthly, the necessity of co-operation and common action; and common action, whether in a church or in any other institution, involves some sacrifice of opinions, tastes, wishes. (*Biographical Sermons*, 144–6.)

The Lady Augusta Stanley

* She was a woman of the world in the best sense of the word. She was in the world and mixed with the world, but was not of it. She was gifted with remarkable prudence, and reticence, and insight into human nature. She had lived much in Courts, but was unspoiled by them; her mind seemed rather to be enriched and ennobled by her

large experience of life. There was never anything shallow or uncharitable in her judgement of persons or events; she had no enmities or antagonisms, she lived herself and counselled others to live in a spirit far above them. If you had asked her to what religious party she belonged she would have been unable to answer; but she would sometimes seriously tell her friends amongst the clergy that they must 'try to lift up the cloud of superstition which was settling upon the Church.' There were many things in religion about which she was habitually silent, probably because, though often familiarly spoken of, she felt that they were not within the range of our knowledge. She was not afraid of the truth, but ready to follow it to the end; as she once said, speaking of her brother, 'the love of the truth ran in her family.' But what was most remarkable in her, the secret of her power, the spring of her life, was her extraordinary affection not for one or two persons only, but for every one with whom she was brought into contact, extending in ever-widening circles to all ranks. She had a kind look or smile or word for everybody; when she entered a room she made the company happier, and brighter, and pleasanter than they were before. The servants of a house in which she was visiting quickly grew attached to her, and would ask when she was coming again. For she had that touch of human feeling which makes all things kin; she knew and kept the secrets of many hearts; she strove to reconcile hostile and jarring natures. A last message to one of her friends was 'that when attacked by others he should regard his opponents only as acting under a misunderstanding.' She had great talents for society,

which she used with the distinct object of bringing people together, that they might become better acquainted and feel more kindly towards one another. . . . I should sum her character in a word; she loved much and therefore she was beloved. But . . . I seem to hear a gentle voice rebuking me for saying too much about her, and ascribing to her virtues which she was not conscious of possessing.

(*Unpublished.*)

W. H. Smith

* Among statesmen who have flourished during the last fifty years, there appear to have been one or two striking examples of men whose internal life was strangely in contrast with their external circumstances. To one such at least our attention has been drawn by the biography which has recently appeared of him. He was a man devoid of brilliant quality, having an indifference, almost a dislike, to power, who for his honesty, his trustworthiness, his disinterestedness, his clear sense and judgement, was chosen at a critical period in the history of this country to be leader of the House of Commons. And when after two or three years his work seemed to be over, as simply as he had taken he resigned his great office, feeling that he had other things to do in the remainder of his life than to be head of a party. Such men should be dear to the hearts of Englishmen, for there are few of them.

(*Unpublished.*)

Lord Macaulay

* He had perhaps the greatest popular fame of any literary man of his time; honours and riches flowed

in upon him in later life. Yet the central point of this great man's heart, as revealed after his death in his letters, is found to be his early home, his surviving sister, the memory of another who had died twenty years before. (*Unpublished.*)

X

THE WISDOM OF LIFE

Ideals

* THERE is a great blessedness in having had ideals; even though they have been imperfectly realized, though we have sometimes seen them and sometimes not, and though it was impossible to carry them with us into daily life and the habits of the world have prevailed over them. Nor indeed would it be good for most of us, or within the limits of human nature, that we should be constantly in a state of spiritual exaltation. A few men of this temper there have been, and when such a temper has been combined with deep and unshaken moral conviction, they have been the authors of the greatest blessings to mankind.

But we see this light at certain seasons only. As in summer-time we may look at the sunset or sunrise when clothed in more than ordinary beauty, —we go our way to our daily work or turn again to our nightly rest, and the recollection becomes fainter; yet we feel that life has been refreshed by it; the sweet light has lighted up the distant earth and heaven for us. And more than we could express to others arose in our minds at the sight;

perhaps associated with the thought of companions whom we have loved, of a child who is at a distance from us, a parent, a wife, whose star has set beneath the horizon. And we cannot speak of these things to others; they would seem fanciful and emotional, and therefore we keep them to ourselves.

(*Unpublished.*)

The Sameness of Life

* There is one thing that strikes us in maturer years when we begin to reflect upon life: not the shortness nor the uncertainty, nor the unhappiness of human life, but the sameness of it; the absence of any power of growth or improvement in ourselves or in others. Time goes on, and finds us at the same place and in the same occupation, and as little changed in mind and character as in our external circumstances. The old friend or former neighbour coming in sees us just the same as ten or twenty years before, having the same weaknesses, the same infirmities of temper, the same ways of thinking and acting, the same remissness or punctuality in business, the same virtues or defects, a little, perhaps, more defined by the advance of years, like the lines in the face, but in the main unaltered. And with many of us the occupation in which we have been engaged has acquired such a hold on the mind as to leave no room for anything else. The greater part of mankind are bowed down by the necessity of providing for their daily wants, and seem hardly able to rise above them. They do as they have always done, and as their fathers did before them; and have no principle of life or growth in them. When

we think of these things, are we not tempted to ask, 'What profit is there in an existence like this, so dull, so dreary, so useless? Would any rational creature desire to come back and have his threescore years and ten over again?'

There was a time, indeed, in which life wore another aspect to us, in the days of childhood and youth, when we seemed to be growing always, dwelling amid youthful hopes and fancies, the very memory of which is still dear to us. Then every year brought some increase to our store of knowledge, some fresh delight, some new experience: the world was full of wonder to us, and many illusions about happiness and success in life hovered about our path. Some dreams gilded the days even of the poorest. That was the age in which friendships were formed by us: the heart was full of sympathy and naturally drew towards others. That was the springtime in which the bloom of life was beginning to appear, and the powers of life to quicken, and the end was still a long way off. But when half our days are told, then the time of growth is past; there is no possibility of adding to our stature; the light of hope becomes dimmer and the end is already in sight. Men say regretfully or jestingly that 'their best years are over now' and that 'they know what the world has to offer.' And when their hour arrives they pass away, neither in any great fear, nor in any great hope, the creatures as they have ever been of habit, and circumstance, and opinion.

This . . . is not the picture of the Christian life.

(*Unpublished.*)

Wasted Lives

There is nothing sadder in this world than the lost or wasted lives of men; sadder to the eye which is able to discern them than poverty or death. Those who are the sufferers in this generally retain a lifelong delusion about them, viz. that they are caused by anybody's fault rather than their own. And they do in fact arise commonly not out of any great fault or crime, but from ignorance of the world or want of conduct, or neglect of opportunities which never recur. Who has not met with the helpless half-intelligent man full of many schemes, who in middle life has nothing to do, and is soliciting his friends to obtain for him an office which he is unfitted to hold, that he and his family may have the means of support! ('Put me into one of the priests' offices that I may eat a piece of bread.')

(*College Sermons*, 256–7.)

Causes of Failure in Life

A common cause of failure is a want of the sense of proportion, that famous art of measure which the Greek philosopher taught, the art of measuring things in their relation to ourselves and in relation to one another. Men aim at what is beyond them when they might have been useful and valuable in a more humble way of life. They have dreams of ambition which might have been a stimulus to them, if they had ever thought seriously of the means by which their dreams were to be realized. They have believed that they were intended by nature to be poets, and they had really probably enough of the poetical temperament to make them admirers or feeble imi-

tators of others. But they did not consider how great was the interval between the appreciation of poetry and the force and fire of genius. Others fancy that they will become great authors or great scholars, when they might have been good teachers. Others are so constituted that they overlook the obvious and seize upon the remote; they lose themselves in paradoxes and crotchets; this is not the stuff out of which sound lawyers or successful practitioners are likely to be made. So youth passes away in many illusions and mistakes, and the real business of life is neglected.

(*College Sermons*, 259–60.)

How far does Christianity influence the World?

It is impossible not to observe that innumerable persons—shall we say the majority of mankind?—who have a belief in God and immortality, have nevertheless hardly any consciousness of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. They seem to live away from them in the routine of business or of society, 'the common life of all men,' not without a sense of right, and a rule of truth and honesty, yet insensible to what our Saviour meant by taking up the cross and following Him, or what St. Paul meant by 'being one with Christ.' They die without any great fear or lively faith; to the last more interested about concerns of this world than about the hope of another. In the Christian sense they are neither proud nor humble; they have seldom experienced the sense of sin, they have never felt keenly the need of forgiveness. Neither on the

other hand do they value themselves on their good deeds, or expect to be saved by their own merits. Often they are men of high moral character; many of them have strong and disinterested attachments, and quick human sympathies; sometimes a stoical feeling of uprightness, or a peculiar sensitiveness to dishonour. It would be a mistake to say they are without religion. They join in its public acts; they are offended at profaneness or impiety; they are thankful for the blessings of life, and do not rebel against its misfortunes. Such persons meet us at every turn. They are those whom we know and associate with; honest in their dealings, respectable in their lives, decent in their conversation. The Scripture speaks to us of two classes represented by the Church and the world, the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the friends and enemies of God. We cannot say in which of these two divisions we should find a place for them.

The picture is a true one, and, if we turn the light round, some of us may find in it a resemblance of ourselves no less than of other men. Others will include us in the same circle in which we are including them. What shall we say to such a state, common as it is to both us and them? The fact that we are considering is not the evil of the world, but the neutrality of the world, the indifference of the world, the inertness of the world. There are multitudes of men and women everywhere who have no peculiarly Christian feelings, to whom, except for the indirect influence of Christian institutions, the life and death of Christ would have made no difference, and who have, nevertheless, the common sense of truth and right almost equally with

true Christians. You cannot say of them 'there is none that doeth good; no, not one.' The other tone of St. Paul is more suitable: 'When the Gentiles that know not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these not knowing the law are a law unto themselves.' So of what we commonly term the world, as opposed to those who make a profession of Christianity, we must not shrink from saying, 'When men of the world do by nature whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, these not being conscious of the grace of God, do by nature what can only be done by His grace.' Why should we make them out worse than they are? We must cease to speak evil of them, ere they will judge fairly of the characters of religious men. That, with so little recognition of His personal relation to them, God does not cast them off, is a ground of hope rather than of fear—of thankfulness, not of regret.

Many strange thoughts arise at the contemplation of this intermediate world, which some blindness, or hardness, or distance in nature, separates from the love of Christ. We ask ourselves 'What will become of them after death?' 'For what state of existence can this present life be a preparation?' Perhaps they will turn the question upon us; and we may answer for ourselves and them, 'that we throw ourselves on the mercy of God.' We cannot deny that in the sight of God they may condemn us; their moral worth may be more acceptable to Him than our Christian feeling. For we know that God is not like some earthly sovereign, who may be offended at the want of attention which we show

to him. He can only estimate us always by our fulfilment of moral and Christian duties. When the balance is struck, it is most probable, nay, it is quite certain, that many who are first will be last, and the last first. And this transfer will take place, not only among those who are within the gates of the Christian Church, but from the world also into the Church. There may be some among us who have given the cup of cold water to a brother, 'not knowing it was the Lord.' Some again may be leading a life in their own family which is 'not far from the kingdom of heaven.' We do not say that for ourselves there is more than one way; that way is Christ. But, in the case of others, it is right that we should take into account their occupation, character, circumstances, the manner in which Christianity may have been presented to them, the intellectual or other difficulties which may have crossed their path. We shall think more of the unconscious Christianity of their lives than of the profession of it on their lips. So that we seem almost compelled to be Christian and unchristian at once: Christian in reference to the obligations of Christianity upon ourselves; unchristian—if indeed it be not a higher kind of Christianity—in not judging those who are unlike ourselves by our own standard. (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 241–3.)

Moral Weakness

There is a state in which man is powerless to act, and is, nevertheless, clairvoyant of all the good and evil of his own nature. He places the good and evil principle before him, and is ever oscillating

between them. He traces the labyrinth of conflicting principles in the world, and is yet further perplexed and entangled. He is sensitive to every breath of feeling, and incapable of the performance of any duty. Or take another example: it sometimes happens that the remembrance of past suffering, or the consciousness of sin, may so weigh a man down as fairly to paralyse his moral power. He is distracted between what he is and what he was; old habits and vices and the new character which is being fashioned in him. Sometimes the balance seems to hang equal; he feels the earnest wish and desire to do rightly, but cannot hope to find pleasure and satisfaction in a good life; he desires heartily to repent, but can never think it possible that God should forgive. 'It is I, and it is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' 'I have, and have never ceased to have, the wish for better things, even amid haunts of infamy and vice.' In such language, even now, though with less fervour than in 'the first spiritual chaos of the affections,' does the soul cry out to God—'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 297.)

Casuistry

The distinctions of the casuist are far from equalling the subtilty of human life, or the diversity of its conditions. It is quite true that actions the same in name are, in the scale of right and wrong, as different as can be imagined; varying with the age, temperament, education, circumstances of each individual. The casuist is not in fault for maintain-

ing this difference, but for supposing that he can classify or distinguish them so as to give any conception of their innumerable shades and gradations. All his folios are but the weary effort to abstract or make a brief of the individuality of man. The very actions which he classifies change their meaning as he writes them down, like the words of a sentence torn away from their context. He is ever idealizing and creating distinctions, splitting straws, dividing hairs; yet any one who reflects on himself will idealize and distinguish further still, and think of his whole life in all its circumstances, with its sequence of thoughts and motives, and, withal, many excuses. But no one can extend this sort of idealism beyond himself; no insight of the confessor can make him clairvoyant of the penitent's soul. Know ourselves we sometimes truly may, but we cannot know others, and no other can know us. No other can know or understand us in the same wonderful or mysterious way; no other can be conscious of the spirit in which we have lived; no other can see us as a whole or get within. God has placed a veil of flesh between ourselves and other men, to screen the nakedness of our soul. Into the secret chamber He does not require that we should admit any other judge or counsellor but Himself. Two eyes only are upon us—the eye of our own soul—the eye of God, and the one is the light of the other. That is the true light, on the which if a man look he will have a knowledge of himself, different in kind from that which the confessor extracts from the books of the casuists.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 173–4.)

The Evils of Casuistry

Casuistry not only renders us independent of our own convictions, it renders us independent also of the opinion of mankind in general. It puts the confessor in the place of ourselves, and in the place of the world. By making the actions of men matters of science, it cuts away the supports and safeguards which public opinion gives to morality; the confessor in the silence of the closet easily introduces principles from which the common sense or conscience of mankind would have shrunk back. Especially in matters of truth and falsehood, in the nice sense of honour shown in the unwillingness to get others within our power, his standard will probably fall short of that of the world at large. Public opinion, it is true, drives men's vices inwards; it teaches them to conceal their faults from others, and if possible from themselves, and this very concealment may sink them in despair, or cover them with self-deceit. And the soul—whose 'house is its castle'—has an enemy within, the strength of which may be often increased by communications from without. Yet the good of this privacy is on the whole greater than the evil. Not only is the outward aspect of society more decorous, and the confidence between man and man less liable to be impaired; the mere fact of men's sins being known to themselves and God only, and the support afforded even by the undeserved opinion of their fellows, are of themselves great helps to a moral and religious life. Many a one by being thought better than he was has become better; by being

thought as bad or worse has become worse. To communicate our sins to those who have no claim to know them is of itself a diminution of our moral strength. It throws upon others what we ought to do for ourselves; it leads us to seek in the sympathy of others a strength which no sympathy can give. It is a greater trust than is right for us commonly to repose in our fellow creatures; it places us in their power; it may make us their tools.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 174–5.)

There had always been a tendency in the Catholic Church, probably arising out of the needs of confession, to analyse and define human actions in a greater degree than their subtle nature really admits. This tendency was carried to the furthest extreme by the Jesuits, who for more than a century were the great spiritual power of the continent of Europe. As a matter of science, they divided and distinguished sins according to their kinds; they separated the intention from the act, the word from the thought; they allowed the judgement of any teacher to be the measure of right and wrong. Having failed in raising up the world to the precepts of the Gospel, they were satisfied if they could bring down the Gospel to the world; provided only the rulers of the world, society however profligate, commerce however dishonest, could be retained within the limits of the Church. They took away the life of a moral being, and substituted for it a dead anatomy of human actions reduced to mere abstractions. From some point of view or other, it was impossible to utter a complete untruth or to commit a perfect sin.

It is strange to reflect that the inventors of these doctrines were many of them men of saintly life, devoted to the service of their fellow men and of God. Yet not the less was their teaching fatal both to morality and religion. Had they succeeded, common honesty and common sense must have disappeared from the world. We should have been compelled to turn not to the Christian Church, but to the great Gentile philosophers, for the first principles of ethics. A vast literature sprang up in many volumes, which expounded the distinctions of this false science; and books founded on the writings of the first Jesuits are still used by the Catholic clergy.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 101–2.)

The Imitation of Christ

He who would be the follower of Christ must come home to himself: he must put away sin and evil; he must have a conscience as the noonday clear; he must think of his own mind as a temple, into which no unclean thing is permitted to enter. And when he has set his own house in order, he may find out ways of doing good to his fellow men. He will seek to infuse into them friendliness and good-will; he will create a good understanding among them, he will try to draw them out of themselves by sympathy and affection. If he would exercise a good influence on society, he must himself also be free from little faults, such as vanity or egotism, which so easily beset us. He will not wish to be admired of the world, but only to do the will of God. The society in which he lives will in some

very real but hardly perceptible manner be the better for his example. He who has a standard above that of ordinary men will insensibly raise them to a higher level. He will be very careful of hurting the feelings of others, and will not allow himself to feel too deeply the slights and accidents which occur in the course of life. For he must be happy himself who would make others happy. He will know that there are times of sorrow and trouble when a word of kindness or advice has a peculiar value. He will find weak natures who need to be encouraged; to stronger natures he may sometimes give a hint which will keep such a one in the right path, and determine the course of his life.

(*College Sermons*, 323–4).

Broken Lives

We acknowledge that there are broken lives, pieces of lives which have begun in this world to be completed, as we believe, in another state of being. And some of them have been like fragments of ancient art, which we prize not for their completeness but for their quality, and because they seem to give us a type of something which we can hardly see anywhere upon earth. Of such lives we must judge, not by what the person said or wrote or did in the short span of human existence, but by what they were: if they exercised some peculiar influence on society and on friends, if they had some rare grace of humility, or simplicity, or resignation, or love of truth, or self-devotion, which was not to be met with in others. God does not measure men's lives only by the amount of work which is

accomplished in them. He who gave the power to work may also withhold the power. And some of these broken lives may have a value in His sight which no bustle or activity of ordinary goodness could have attained. There have been persons confined to a bed of sickness, blind, palsied, tormented with pain and want, who yet may be said to have led an almost perfect life. Such persons afford examples to us, not indeed of a work carried out to the end (for their circumstances did not admit of this), but of a work, whether finished or unfinished, which at any moment is acceptable to God. And we desire to learn of them, and to have an end like theirs when the work of active life is over and we sit patiently waiting for the will of God.

(*College Sermons*, 344–5.)

The Happiness of Family Life

The family, like the home in which they live, needs to be kept in repair, lest some little rift in the walls should appear and let in the wind and rain. The happiness of a family depends very much on attention to little things. Order, comfort, regularity, cheerfulness, good taste, pleasant conversation—these are the ornaments of daily life, deprived of which it degenerates into a wearisome routine. There must be light in the dwelling, and brightness and pure spirits and cheerful smiles. Home is not usually the place of toil, but the place to which we return and rest from our labours; in which parents and children meet together and pass a joyful and careless hour. To have nothing to say to others at such times, in any rank of life, is a very unfortunate

temper of mind, and may perhaps be regarded as a serious fault; at any rate, it makes a house vacant and joyless, and persons who are afflicted by this distemper should remember seriously that if it is not cured in time it will pursue them through life. It is one of the lesser troubles of the family: and there is yet another trouble—members of a family often misunderstand one another's characters. They are sensitive or shy, or retired; or they have some fanciful sorrow which they cannot communicate to others; or something which was said to them has produced too deep an impression on their minds. In their own family they are like strangers; the inexperience of youth exaggerates this trial, and they have no one to whom they can turn for advice or help. This is the time for sympathy—the sympathy of a brother or sister, or father or mother—which unlocks the hidden sorrow, and purges away the perilous stuff which was depressing the mind and injuring the character. Sympathy, too, is the noblest exercise; of it is the Spirit of God working together with our spirit; it is warmth as well as light, putting into us a new heart, and taking away the stony heart which is dead to its natural surroundings.

(*Miscellaneous Sermons*, 344–5.)

The Softening Influence of Death

How different are our recollections of the dead as they pass from us, at one age or another, in all the various circumstances of human life, some *flentes in limine primo*, having never tasted of good and evil, others sinking to rest after many years and the fulfilment of many duties, some famous and opulent,

others sleeping in a nameless grave. Almost every family, however humble, has its tale of love and death. There was the little child, who if it had survived would have long since grown up to the estate of man or woman, with its prattle and its playthings and its innocent ways, who still after twenty years and more has a corner in the soul of some one. There was the elder brother or sister, whose loving and peaceful end, whose thought of others and thoughtlessness of themselves, have left an impression which the rest of the family carry with them to the grave. There was the aged man, who seemed to be already the inhabitant of another world. There were our parents, too, who did so much for us, on whom, looking back in later life, we feel that we hardly recognized the debt that was due to them. We may not always have understood them; we sometimes took offence at them needlessly. There are some things which we should like to say to them, but the time for speaking has passed. There are some chapters of life (not our whole lives) that we should like to have over again; this, however, is not possible. These are some of the reflections which, when they dive into the past, older persons find arising in their minds; which the young when they cease to be young, 'and the time for speaking has past,' may find occurring to themselves.

There are other relations which are severed by death—such as, above all, the tie of husband and wife, of the lover and his beloved:

> 'But she is in her grave, and oh!
> The difference to me!'

Friends, too, must part who have loved each other

as their own souls. Sometimes they may have conversed together in perfect friendship, and sometimes there may have been an imperfect sympathy, or a slight exactingness on the part of either, or a change of circumstances may have prevented the talking freely together, or interposed a cloud or distance between them. How different do all these things appear in the presence of death: then we feel that we cannot say too much good of a beloved friend; we are happy if in moments of temporary alienation we never uttered a word against them. And the estimate which we form of them and of other men after they are gone is really more just, because it is not disturbed by personal feeling. History, too, is more just to great men than their own contemporaries are apt to be. For they are removed from us by distance, so that we see them in their true proportions. A man's life, regarded as a whole, is better and truer than the running commentary on his words and actions which is made from day to day. And so too with private friends: we are no longer *exigeant* in our view of them; we take them now as they are; we do not ask of them superhuman virtue or a combination of impossible qualities.

(*Biographical Sermons*, 131–3.)

Sympathy, Human and Divine

In merely human things, the aid and sympathy of others increase our power to act: it is also the fact that we can work more effectually and think more truly where the issue is not staked on the result of our thought and work. The confidence of success would be more than half the secret of success, did

it not also lead to the relaxation of our efforts. But in the life of the believer, the sympathy, if such a figure of speech may be allowed, is not human, but Divine; the confidence is not a confidence in ourselves, but in the power of God, which at once takes us out of ourselves and increases our obligation to exertion. The instances just mentioned have an analogy, though but a faint one, with that which we are considering. They are shadows of the support which we receive from the Infinite and Everlasting. As the philosopher said that his theory of fatalism was absolutely required to insure the repose necessary for moral action, it may be said, in a far higher sense, that the consciousness of a Divine Providence is necessary to enable a rational being to meet the present trials of life, and to look without fear on his future destiny.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 126–7.)

Changes in Life and Character

All that is true in the theory of habits seems to be implied in the notion of order or regularity. Even this is inadequate to give a conception of the structure of human beings. Order is the beginning, but freedom is the perfection of our moral nature. Men do not live at random, or act one instant without reference to their actions just before. And in youth especially, the very sameness of our occupations is a sort of stay and support to us, as in age it may be described as a kind of rest. But no one will say that the mere repetition of actions until they constitute a habit gives any explanation of the higher and nobler forms of human virtue, or the finer

moulds of character. Life cannot be explained as the working of a mere machine, still less can moral or spiritual life be reduced to merely mechanical laws.

But if, while acknowledging that a great proportion of mankind are the creatures of habit, and that a great part of our actions are nothing more than the result of habit, we go on to ask ourselves about the changes of our life and fix our minds on the critical points, we are led to view human nature, not only in a wider and more generous spirit, but also in a way more accordant with the language of Scripture. We no longer measure ourselves by days or by weeks; we are conscious that at particular times we have undergone great revolutions or emotions; and then, again, have intervened periods, lasting perhaps for years, in which we have pursued the even current of our way. Our progress towards good may have been in idea an imperceptible and regular advance; in fact, we know it to have been otherwise. We have taken plunges in life; there are many eras noted in our existence. The greatest changes are those of which we are the least able to give an account, and which we feel the most disposed to refer to a superior power. That they were simply mysterious, like some utterly unknown natural phenomena, is our first thought about them. But although unable to fathom their true nature, we are capable of analysing many of the circumstances which accompany them, and of observing the impulses out of which they arise.

Every man has the power of forming a resolution, or, without previous resolution, in any particular instance, acting as he will. As thoughts come into

the mind one cannot tell how, so too motives spring up without our being able to trace their origin. Why we suddenly see a thing in a new light, is often hard to explain; why we feel an action to be right or wrong which has previously seemed indifferent, is not less inexplicable. We fix the passing dream or sentiment in action; the thought is nothing, the deed may be everything. That day after day, to use a familiar instance, the drunkard will find abstinence easier, is probably untrue; but that from once abstaining he will gain a fresh experience, and receive a new strength and inward satisfaction, which may result in endless consequences, is what every one is aware of. It is not the sameness of what we do, but its novelty, which seems to have such a peculiar power over us; not the repetition of many blind actions, but the performance of a single conscious one, that is the birth to a new life. Indeed, the very sameness of actions is often accompanied with a sort of weariness, which makes men desirous of change.

Nor is it less true that by the commission, not of many, but a single act of vice or crime, an inroad is made into our whole moral constitution, which is not proportionably increased by its repetition. The first act of theft, falsehood, or other immorality, is an event in the life of the perpetrator which he never forgets. It may often happen that no account can be given of it; that there is nothing in the education, nor in the antecedents of the person, that would lead us, or even himself, to suspect it. In the weaker sort of natures, especially, suggestions of evil spring up we cannot tell how. Human beings are the creatures of habit; but they are the creatures

of impulse too; and from the greater variableness of the outward circumstances of life, and especially of particular periods of life, and the greater freedom of individuals, it may, perhaps, be found that human actions, though less liable to wide-spread or sudden changes, have also become more capricious, and less reducible to simple causes, than formerly.

Changes in character come more often in the form of feeling than of reason, from some new affection or attachment, or alienation of our former self, rather than from the slow growth of experience, or a deliberate sense of right and duty. The meeting with some particular person, the remembrance of some particular scene, the last words of a parent or friend, the reading of a sentence in a book, may call forth a world within us of the very existence of which we were previously unconscious. New interests arise such as we never before knew, and we can no longer lie grovelling in the mire, but must be up and doing; new affections seem to be drawn out, such as warm our inmost soul and make action and exertion a delight to us. Mere human love at first sight, as we say, has been known to change the whole character and produce an earthly effect, analogous to that heavenly love of Christ and the brethren of which the New Testament speaks. Have we not seen the passionate become calm, the licentious pure, the weak strong, the scoffer devout? We may not venture to say with St. Paul, 'This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.' But such instances serve, at least, to quicken our sense of the depth and subtlety of human nature.

Of many of these changes no other reason can be

given than that nature and the Author of nature have made men capable of them. There are others, again, which we seem to trace, not only to particular times, but to definite actions, from which they flow in the same manner that other effects follow from their causes. Among such causes none are more powerful than acts of self-sacrifice and devotion. A single deed of heroism makes a man a hero; it becomes a part of him, and, strengthened by the approbation and sympathy of his fellow men, a sort of power which he gains over himself and them. Something like this is true of the lesser occasions of life no less than of the greatest; provided in either case the actions are not of such a kind that the performance of them is a violence to our nature. Many a one has stretched himself on the rank of asceticism, without on the whole raising his nature; often he has seemed to have gained in self-control only what he has lost in the kindlier affections, and by his very isolation to have wasted the opportunities which nature offered him of self-improvement. But no one with a heart open to human feelings, loving not man the less, but God more, sensitive to the happiness of this world, yet aiming at a higher—no man of such a nature ever made a great sacrifice, or performed a great act of self-denial, without impressing a change on his character, which lasted to his latest breath. No man ever took his besetting sin, it may be lust, or pride, or love of rank and position, and, as it were, cut it out by voluntarily placing himself where to gratify it was impossible, without sensibly receiving a new strength of character. In one day, almost in an hour, he may become an altered man; he may stand, as it were, on a different stage

of moral and religious life; he may feel himself in new relations to an altered world.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 119–23.)

The Reality of Religious Influences

Knowledge itself is a weak instrument to stir the soul compared with religion; morality has no way to the heart of man; but the Gospel reaches the feelings and the intellect at once. In nations as well as individuals, in barbarous times as well as civilized, in the great crises of history especially, even in the latest ages, when the minds of men seem to wax cold, and all things remain the same as at the beginning, it has shown itself to be a reality without which human nature would cease to be what it is. Almost every one has had the witness of it in himself. No one, says Plato, ever passed from youth to age in unbelief of the gods, in heathen times. Hardly any educated person in a Christian land has passed from youth to age without some aspiration after a better life, some thought of the country to which he is going.

As a fact, it would be admitted by most that, at some period of their lives, the thought of the world to come and of future judgement, the beauty and loveliness of the truths of the Gospel, the sense of the shortness of our days here, have wrought a more quickening and powerful effect than any moral truths or prudential maxims. Many a one would acknowledge that he has been carried whither he knew not; and had nobler thoughts, and felt higher aspirations, than the course of his ordinary life seemed to allow. These were the most important moments of his life

for good or for evil; the critical points which have made him what he is, either as he used or neglected them. They came he knew not how, sometimes with some outward and apparent cause, at other times without—the result of affliction or sickness, or 'the wind blowing where it listeth.'

And if such changes and such critical points should be found to occur in youth more often than in age, in the poor and ignorant rather than in the educated, in women more often than in men—if reason and reflection seem to weaken as they regulate the springs of human action, this very fact may lead us to consider that reason, and reflection, and education, and the experience of age, and the force of manly sense, are not the links which bind us to the communion of the body of Christ; that it is rather to those qualities which we have, or may have, in common with our fellow men, that the Gospel is promised; and that it is with the weak, the poor, the babes in Christ—not with the strong-minded, the resolute, the consistent—that we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

(*The Epistles of St. Paul*, ii. 131–2.)

DATE DUE

Demco, Inc. 38-293

GTU Library
3 2400 00669 0949

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall